PHILOSOPHICAL

DISSERTATIONS.

BY

JAMES BALFOUR, Esq; of PILRIG.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE ſubjects of the following Diſſertations are indeed common, yet they are of ſuch importance, that they cannot too much employ our thoughts.

The preſent age boaſts of being enlightened. This may be allowed with regard to the arts and ſciences, which depend chiefly upon experience. Theſe muſt receive great improvement from the facility of communicating different experiments by means of the preſs; but the caſe may be very different, with reſpect to what is called Univerſal Philoſophy, or the abſtract knowledge of Nature.

This knowledge depends chiefly upon the exerciſe of the mental faculties, and has little aſſiſtance from experience; and the art of printing, of the greateſt utility in the former caſe,

caſe, may in this other caſe have a very different effect.

This valuable art opens an eaſy paſſage for the admiſſion of numberleſs ideas; but an obvious bad effect naturally ariſes from this. A crowd of ideas in the mind creates confuſion; and curioſity, puſhing us on in queſt of new ideas, excludes that patient attention, which matters of importance require. Thus our knowledge may have a very extenſive ſurface, without proportional depth.

Perhaps another bad effect of this enlargement of our ideas is, that we acquire a peculiar confidence in the powers of our underſtanding, and, without due examination, admit that as truth, to which we are determined by paſſion and prejudice, more than the cool dictates of reaſon. This may land us in one or other of the two oppoſite extremes, ſcepticiſm or dogmatiſm. In the firſt, if we ſhall happen to meet with any certain truth, inconſiſtent with concluſions which we have

raſhly

raſhly deduced from principles not duly examined. In the other, when not meeting, or not being willing to meet with ſuch contradiction, we are apt to aſcribe a kind of infallibility to our own underſtanding, and to place the raſh concluſions of our own reaſon in direct oppoſition to the common ſenſe of mankind. Nay, ſome are bold enough to paſs the circle which divides light and darkneſs, and even, in the midſt of darkneſs, take upon them to determine what infinite wiſdom has done, or rather what it ought to have done. Hence it is, that we have too much cauſe to regret, that ſome ingenious compoſitions, otherwiſe diſtinguiſhed for beauty and elegance, are yet diſfigured by the mixture of the groſſeſt abſurdities.

How far the principles employed in the following diſſertations have been ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, or if any new light has been thrown upon the intereſting particulars which they contain, the Author is perhaps an improper

proper judge. This is what at leaſt he intended; and, if he has had any manner of ſucceſs, he hopes it may give an occaſion to perſons of greater abilities to ſupply his defects, and to add elegance to the compoſition, as well as force to the argument, in ſupport of truths of the utmoſt moment to the happineſs of mankind, the great object which the Author thinks he had ſolely in his view.

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ERRATA.

ERRATA.

Page 24. *line* laſt, *for* grow, *read ſow.*

32. 21. *for* ſays, *read* ſay.

43. 11. *for* blow, *read* bow.

54. 4. *for* deſires, *read* deſire.

56. 8. *for* equipotent, *read* equipollent.

— 13. *for* propellent, *read* prepollent.

87. 16. *for* ſea, *read* ſeat.

DISSERTATION I.

Of Matter and Motion.

THE extent and order of the material world preſent, in the moſt ſenſible manner, to the general obſervation of mankind, a ſyſtem ſo grand, ſo beautiful, and ſo juſt, as muſt command the admiration, and engage the curioſity of every one capable of the exerciſe of his rational faculties; and the ſlighteſt attention to an object ſo very extraordinary, cannot fail to excite in the mind certain ideas of wiſdom and power, great beyond comprehenſion, which muſt have been employed in the formation, ſupport, and direction of this amazing machine.

Hence it is that the idea of Deity was univerſally entertained by all the nations of the world, the moſt barbarous and ſavage not excepted.

Every appearance in nature concurred to proclaim, with a voice to be underſtood by people of every language, the being, and perfections of a ſovereign mind, as the object of univerſal homage and adoration.

And, as the opinion of a Deity was thus in a manner forced upon the ſenſes of mankind, ſo it received further confirmation from the reaſonings of philoſophers, founded on more accurate inquiries and obſervations.

Certain philoſophers, however, from whatever cauſe, (ambitious, perhaps, to have themſelves diſtinguiſhed by a peculiarity or boldneſs of genius) thought fit to forſake the beaten tract, and to advance and maintain this extraordinary opinion, that the preſent ſyſtem of things originated from the mere qualities of matter and motion alone, and was the conſequence of the fortuitous concourſe of atoms, performing their giddy dance through an unlimited period of ages.

This abſurd opinion was fully refuted by the other ſects of philoſophers, who, beſides,

take

take notice of one very remarkable defect in the very foundation of their argument: They ſuppoſe matter in motion, but never inquire how it came to be put in motion, whether by itſelf, or ſome very different cauſe.

Had they affirmed that matter put itſelf in motion, they not only could have brought no proof of this aſſertion, but would have found it contrary to the univerſal experience of mankind. Had they allowed a different cauſe of motion, this would have defeated their great purpoſe, which was to exclude a Deity from the univerſe altogether.

Yet it muſt be confeſſed, that, whatever the Epicurean philoſophy ſuffered from defect of argument, was fully made up by that licentiouſneſs to which it gave full indulgence. It was this unhappy circumſtance which increaſed the number of the diſciples of that ſect.

No circumſtance, however, could always ſupport a falſe and erroneous ſyſtem, in oppoſition to a truth which was conſtantly ſet

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in a clearer light, and received ſtronger evidence from every ſtep that was taken in the progreſs of true philoſophy, and the experimental knowledge of nature.

Particularly ſince the revival of learning in theſe later ages, ſuch amazing diſcoveries have been made with regard to the magnificence, regularity, and conſtancy of the great parts of this our world, and the exquiſite ſubtility and perfect elegance of its ſmaller parts, that the Epicurean hypotheſis, oppoſed to this noble, but true repreſentation of nature, muſt vaniſh into nothing like an empty miſt before the meridian ſun.

But, though the direct hypotheſis of Epicurus is, and muſt now be totally diſcarded, yet his diſciples, the Materialiſts, would impoſe upon us a ſyſtem nearly of the ſame kind, though under the diſguiſe of an obſcure and ambiguous term.

Nature, ſay they, is that principle upon which every change that happens is to be accounted for: And by Nature they ſeem to underſtand ſome active quality of matter,

by

by which every phaenomenon in the univerſe is produced.

If, however, they would with due attention examine the idea which they affix to the word Nature, at leaſt as it relates to corporeal objects, they would find nothing in that idea but what was purely paſſive; and that the true principle of action muſt be ſought for, not in matter, but in mind alone, as it is hoped will afterwards be clearly demonſtrated.

But, as one error commonly makes way for another, the Materialiſts, though they veſt what they call Nature with ſovereign power, they often make her very fooliſh in the meaſures ſhe purſues.

Thus the celebrated Berlin philoſopher, Maupertuis, having diſcovered a ſtone in Lapland, upon which a few characters were engraved, he firſt would have us believe that they contained ſome ſenſible aphoriſm; but, as he imagines that the faculties of that people were ſtupified by perpetual froſt, he is difficulted to account for their being capable either

either of a ſenſible conception, or the expreſſion of it. To explain this wonderful phaenomenon, he ſuppoſes that, in ſome preceding period of the world, the equator and axis of the earth were different from what they are at preſent, whereby the Laplanders might then be in a happy climate; that then they executed this unknown inſcription, when there were no froſts to benumb either their bodies or their minds.

Thus the great frame of Nature muſt be deranged, in order to enable the poor Laplanders to cut out a few figures upon a ſtone; and yet theſe Laplanders are famed for their Lyrick poetry, and ſat by their repreſentatives in the Swediſh houſe of Boors, immediately before the late revolution of government in that kingdom.

This concluſion of Maupertuis, however abſurd, is yet adopted as a certain principle by a brother philoſopher, in his *Philoſophie a la Nature*, who further mentions an obſervation made by an aſtronomer, of ſome ſmall variations of the angle made by the ecliptic

ecliptic and the equator. But, ſuppoſing ſuch obſervation juſt, yet, it appears from the whole hiſtory of aſtronomy, that ſuch variations are of little conſequence, and make no ſenſible alteration of the climates. Yet, upon this ſlight foundation, Helvetius builds this monſtrous concluſion, that, through periods of ages, bordering upon eternity, (which, by the bye, can have no borders), the ecliptic has ever been ſhifting backwards and forwards, betwixt the equator and the poles. The motion of the ecliptic round the equator, is ſenſible and regular, and as innocent as it is wonderful; but the above motion of the ecliptic along the meridians, would prove as fatal in its conſequences, as it is without foundation in theory or fact.

It is unneceſſary further to proſecute the abſurdities of materialiſm, becauſe it is chiefly intended to deſtroy the principle upon which they all depend.

Before entering upon this argument, it may be proper to obſerve, that, from the diſproportion

diſproportion of language to the great extent of our ideas, an imperfection of that faculty naturally ariſes, ſo that one term is often uſed in different, and ſometimes in oppoſite ſenſes; from this ariſes a danger of changing the meaning of a term, which can hardly fail of leading us into very erroneous concluſions. This obſervation is particularly applicable to the words *cauſe* and *power*; the meaning of which ought, in the preſent argument, to be aſcertained, with the greateſt preciſion. The word *cauſe* admits of ſeveral different ſenſes, two of which will chiefly deſerve our attention at preſent, viz. an efficient and inſtrumental cauſe. This diſtinction will be ſufficiently underſtood by conſidering a machine, in which there is a regular communication of motion from one part of it to another; that part of the machine which immediately communicates the motion to what is next in order, is commonly called the *cauſe* of this motion; but then by this muſt be underſtood only the inſtrumental cauſe; for the

the proper efficient cauſe of the operations of the machine, is diſtinct from matter, and totally independent upon mechaniſm. In ſuch a caſe, Mr Hume's acuteneſs could not ſecure him againſt a very fallacious reaſoning. In a ſucceſſion of objects, ſays he, each part is cauſed by that which preceded it, and cauſes that which ſucceeds *. From his reaſoning it appears, that he conſidered that as an efficient which can only be an inſtrumental cauſe.

The word *power* is taken in ſenſes not only different, but even oppoſite. It ſometimes ſignifies active, and ſometimes paſſive power; a power of moving, or of being moved. Thus matter has a paſſive power, a power of being put in motion, or having its ſhape and configuration altered by a proper agent; but, to ſay that matter itſelf is this agent, is to aſcribe to it a power and property of a very different nature, and which can belong to mind alone.

* Dial. nat. rel. p. 166.

We ſhall then attempt to ſhow that matter is not, and cannot be poſſeſſed of an active power of moving itſelf.

We ſhall begin with experience; and indeed the evidence ariſing from experience is ſo ſtrong, and its influence ſo univerſal over all mankind, that there never was any man, who, in his ſober ſenſes, and influenced by philoſophical ſubtility, ever believed that matter either did, or could begin motion of itſelf. Although matter is almoſt every where in motion, and the ſources of that motion cannot be traced out; yet, every thinking perſon conſiders ſuch motion as communicated, although he cannot eaſily purſue it up to its original efficient cauſe. In proof of the foregoing aſſertion, let us ſuppoſe any piece of matter laid upon a horizontal plane, and the plane to remain immoveable, no one will ever entertain the moſt diſtant idea that ſuch piece of matter will ever begin to move itſelf, or riſe from the plane, by an inherent power of its own. Nay, if he ſhould obſerve

obſerve it to move, he will conclude this either to be the effect of ſome imperceptible machinery, or real miracle, contrary to nature.

This ſubject may be inveſtigated on general principles. A power of acting, and the exertion of that power, are two different things; theſe, however, are not looſe, and independent of one another, but intimately connected. What is the principle which connects them? In intelligent active beings, it is thought, and volition.

In matter we can diſcover no ſuch principle. The ſimplicity of thought is contradictory to the compound nature of matter, and to ſay that matter thinks, is as abſurd as to ſay that one ſimple idea is the ſame with ten thouſand exiſting in different ſubjects. Suppoſe a body in a quieſcent ſtate for a hundred years, and that then, without any change of external circumſtances, it ſhall begin to move, What is the nature of this principle of action? Why was it dormant ſo long? And whence

does

does it now begin to operate? Search into the inmoſt receſs of matter, you will never be able to diſcover in it any principle which connects the exiſtence of active power, with the exertion of it. Nay, on the contrary, you will diſcover the impoſſibility of its having any ſuch principle. For, as matter conſiſts of parts diviſible *in infinitum*, when one body moves, as many thouſand different parts as you pleaſe muſt move at the ſame time, and in the ſame line of direction; and, if active power is inherent in matter, each of theſe parts muſt have its particular principle of action, that is to ſay, the principles of action muſt be multiplied *in infinitum*, and yet muſt all agree to exert their force at the ſame inſtant of time, and in the ſame line of direction, than which nothing can be more incredible.

Indeed, ſo far is matter from being poſſeſſed of an active principle, that, on the contrary, philoſophers have diſcovered in it a quality which they call *vis inertiae*, whereby it reſiſts motion, inſtead of having any tendency

tendency to it; and, conſequently, matter is called dull, inert, and altogether paſſive.

But perhaps a reaſoning from the ſtriking phaenomena of nature, will make a ſtronger impreſſion upon the mind than ſubtile and metaphyſical arguments.

Let us then conſider the great bodies which conſtitute our ſolar ſyſtem. Six of them are called Primary, and ten of them are called Secondary planets; the Sun itſelf is in the centre of the whole. All theſe planets move with immenſe velocity, not in exact circles, but in elliptical figures; the firſt having the Sun for their only centre, the others having the primary planets for their immediate centres, and attending the primaries in their orbits round the Sun. The planes of theſe orbits, however, are ſo diſtinguiſhed, and the diſtances of the planets themſelves from one another are ſo great, that, though they all ſuffer mutual attraction, yet, the order of the ſyſtem is preſerved with ſo much conſtancy, that all the eclipſes of the planets can be aſcertained with the greateſt exactneſs for ages to come.

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The coincidence of ſeveral material circumſtances appears neceſſary to eſtabliſh and maintain this great order of nature. A certain degree of velocity in the motions of the planets, a diſtinction in the planes of their orbits, the ſame univerſal laws to regulate their motions, great and duly proportioned diſtances from one another; all theſe circumſtances, and indeed many more, as they appear neceſſary to the order and ſtability of our complicated ſyſtem, ſo they as certainly imply unity of deſign, a powerful and intelligent principle, which comprehends and unites, in one view, all the parts of the ſyſtem, and can only maintain and ſupport its beautiful and unerring order.

The motion, therefore, of theſe great bodies, the degree of this motion, and the conſtant laws which govern it, muſt, as well as any of the other circumſtances, be all reſolveable into the wiſdom and power of the firſt great cauſe.

It is impoſſible for the planets to give to themſelves a certain degree of velocity, to aſſume

aſſume their proper places in the heavens, to determine the planes of their orbits, and all of them to obſerve the ſame univerſal laws of motion. For this purpoſe they muſt have acted in concert with one another, and each of them have had a complete view of the whole order of the ſyſtem.

The groſs abſurdity of theſe unavoidable concluſions, is a complete demonſtration of this important truth, That it is one ſovereign mind, whoſe wiſdom deviſed the great ſyſtem of Nature, and whoſe power alone executes the laws of motion neceſſary for its ſupport. The heavenly bodies, therefore, have only a miniſterial office; they muſt move in certain orbits, from which they cannot depart, and that for purpoſes not their own, and which they know nothing about.

We muſt have the cleareſt conception of this evident truth, when we reflect upon our own operations. If we would reduce matter into any regular form, the underſtanding muſt not only be employ-

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ed in deviſing this form, but our active power muſt be applied to communicate ſuch movements to the different parts of matter as may at laſt iſſue in the regular effect intended. So that the exiſtence, as well as the direction of motion, muſt be derived from one and the ſame powerful and deſigning cauſe, and appear indeed to be eſſentially united.

There is one circumſtance which reſpects ſome of the comets, which deſerves to be remarked, and that is, whilſt all the other heavenly bodies move from weſt to eaſt, certain comets move in a contrary direction. This phaenomenon is not only a refutation of the abſurd opinion of a vortex, but a further demonſtration of the abſolute dependence of the material world upon the continual agency of the great firſt cauſe.

But, let us paſs from the great to the minute parts of nature, and the power and wiſdom of the Creator will appear as conſpicuous in the one as in the other. If the firſt aſtoniſh us with their magnitude, the

others no leſs aſtoniſh us with their amazing ſubtility.

How very fine muſt theſe effluvia be, which often, for many years, proceed from certain odoriferous bodies? how amazingly ſubtile muſt the particles of light be, whole oceans of which have been inceſſantly emitted from the ſun, with inconceivable velocity, ever ſince the world began, without any ſenſible diminution of the ſubſtance of that great luminary?

An ingenious gentleman, (as taken notice of in the Annual Regiſter) made accurate microſcopical obſervations upon the wing of a peacock butterfly, and he found it to be a piece of natural moſaic work, a thouſand times finer than the moſt exquiſite work of that kind, accompliſhed by the higheſt improvements of art.

Mr Ray would have us believe, that ſome animalcules are ſo ſmall, that a drop of water may contain millions of millions of them, and yet each animalcule muſt have all the parts neceſſary to animal life.

And to mention only one inſtance more, Dr Cheyne, in his Philoſophical Principles of Religion, acquaints us, upon the authority of Mr Leuwenhoeck, that a grain of ſand will cover one hundred and twenty-five thouſand of the orifices of the excretory ducts, the paſſages of inſenſible perſpiration.

Theſe things, indeed, aſtoniſh and confound all the powers of imagination. Reaſon, however, can give them credit, as it diſcovers, by mathematical evidence, that two lines may be drawn from any two points, in ſuch a manner, as that the more they are produced, they ſhall approach nearer and nearer; and yet, though produced *in infinitum*, they ſhall never meet.

The ſlighteſt reflection upon theſe appearances of Nature, muſt demonſtrate the abſolute ſubjection of matter to the will of its great Author. The rays of light receive their velocity from his continued influence; they cannot fly at random, but muſt invariably obey the laws of reflexion and refraction, eſtabliſhed for the wiſeſt purpoſes.

But

But it would be endleſs to enter into particulars. By means of artificial inſtruments, ſuch diſcoveries have been made of the beauty and order of Nature, as confound the imagination, and leave room for no other ſentiment than that of admiration, and even aſtoniſhment; and yet certainly our knowledge ſtill remains extremely imperfect.

If we then contemplate the whole order of Nature, and that beauty and regularity which it conſtantly exhibits, even in ſo far as it is laid open to us, we never can derive its origin from mere power, which, acting in a blind and uncertain manner, could produce nothing but confuſion. Wiſdom to direct the proper motions of matter, is as neceſſary as power is to produce them. Both theſe qualities muſt be eſſentially united, in order to eſtabliſh and maintain the great and regular ſyſtem of Nature, and mind alone can be the centre of ſuch union. To apply theſe qualities to mere matter, and even to every particle of matter, is an abſur-

dity,

dity, a greater than which cannot be conceived.

As all the changes in Nature are produced by means of the motions of matter, and exhibit the moſt amazing diſplay of wiſdom and deſign, eſpecially in the production of plants, and animals of every ſpecies, it is evident, beyond the leaſt ſhadow of doubt, that the communication and direction of theſe movements, muſt far exceed the powers of dull and unthinking matter, and be only reſolveable into one and the ſame great ſource and origin.

Though it may now appear unneceſſary to purſue this argument any further, in order to demonſtrate the impoſſibility of matter's being the cauſe of its own motion, there is yet one phaenomenon ſo extraordinary, as muſt deſerve to be taken notice of, and that is what is commonly called the Inſtinct of Animals.

This is indeed an extenſive and a copious ſubject; but a few obſervations will ſerve our preſent purpoſe.

Reaſon

Reaſon is a principle given for a guide to man; inſtinct is that which directs the operations of the inferior animals.

Reaſon is ſlow, and often erroneous in its deciſions. Long time, and much experience, are requiſite for its improvement; and, in different perſons, it frequently purſues its object by different means, and in a different manner.

Inſtinct is the reverſe of all this; its operation is inſtantaneous and juſt; and it always exerts itſelf in the ſame manner.

The different tribes of birds build their neſts in a different manner; yet all the individuals of the ſame tribe build their neſts preciſely in the ſame manner, and that with an invariable uniformity. This they do without the aid of reflection, or the leaſt experience and obſervation. The young bees ſpread themſelves abroad in the fields, where they diſcover the repoſitories of wax, which they carry home to their hives, and therewith conſtruct their cells according to the niceſt rules of geometry. They then return

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to the fields, and deſpoil the flowers of their ſweets, which they lodge in their cells, to be a proviſion againſt a ſeaſon, of which they have had no manner of experience.

What then is this principle which we call inſtinct? It cannot be reaſon, from what has been already obſerved. It cannot be intuitive knowledge; for this would give it a degree of perfection, which the higheſt created intelligences ſeem incapable of; much leſs can it be the effect of mere chance; for, that every individual of a tribe, through all the various generations of animals, ſhould conſtantly obſerve the ſame oeconomy, is utterly inconſiſtent with the notion of chance.

Into what, then, ſhall we reſolve this wonderful principle of inſtinct? It is impoſſible to aſcribe to any thing, but the immediate influence of Providence, ſuch a regular and uninterrupted chain of the moſt proper effects. And thus we have a ſtrong additional confirmation of this important truth, that it is the power and influence of the

great

great Firſt Cauſe, that puts, and keeps in motion, all the curious wheels of this wonderful machine.

Indeed, this great truth was ſo obvious to the common ſenſe of mankind, ſo loudly proclaimed by all the appearances of Nature, that it was never called in queſtion, till men, leaving the plain paths of Nature, involved themſelves in the intricate mazes of a falſe philoſophy.

This obſervation is confirmed by the uniform authority of the great poets of antiquity, whoſe province it was to imitate Nature, and repreſent the genuine characters and ſentiments of men.

The doctrine of a particular providence is incorporated in the ſublime poems of Homer; and no leſs conſpicuous in the beautiful productions of many of the ſubſequent poets, from which, however, it would be improper to multiply quotations. I ſhall, therefore, confine myſelf to thoſe below *.

Even

* Daughters of Jove, whom ſacred ardours fire,
Pierian Muſes, celebrate your ſire.

In

Even thoſe (whoſe love of pleaſure led them to embrace the licentious ſyſtem of Epicurus,) when giving way to the natural dictates of their minds, readily acknowledged a ſovereign power; and that it was the Deity who put in motion the whole frame of Nature with the greateſt facility *.

It is therefore evident, from abſtract reaſoning, from all the appearances of Nature, and

In heavenly numbers his great power declare,
And let the world his awful nod revere.
By him alone, the mighty and the mean
Their ſeveral ſtations take; 'tis he again
Pulls from his ſphere, the man with pride elate,
And raiſes virtue from her humble ſtate. HES.

O let us mortals ſtill begin with Jove,
And ever let us celebrate his love.
His providence pervades both ſea and land,
And all our bliſs flows from his bounteous hand.
We are his offspring, with paternal care,
For us he marks the ſeaſons of the year.
By certain ſigns inſtructs us when to plough,
And in what order various ſeeds to grow. ARAT.

† Cuncta ſupercilio moventis. HOR.

and the common ſenſe of mankind, that matter has no active, but only a paſſive power; and that all its movements muſt be communicated and maintained by a powerful and preſiding mind.

When we then talk of the power of Nature, if we mean active power, it can be nothing elſe than the influence or agency of Providence, which pervades the whole ſyſtem, and is alone the efficient cauſe of all the changes and agreeable viciſſitudes which proceed in a regular manner.

It is the opinion of ſome philoſophers, that Providence employs certain created and finite minds, to carry on the various operations of the great ſyſtem of Nature. Dr Cudworth, particularly, ſuppoſes what he calls Plaſtic Natures, having a power to move matter, but without thought or conſciouſneſs; and that theſe are the immediate cauſes of all the motions of matter.

Although he does not aſſign a particular mind to every pile of graſs, yet, he divides the univerſe amongſt theſe Secondary

agents, in proportion to the extent of the different objects of Nature.

The chief reaſons which ſeem to lead the Doctorto this extraordinary opinion, are, that the ſole direction of this great univerſe, and all that it contains, would appear operoſe; that ſome parts of nature are too minute to merit the immediate attention of the Deity; and that, if God was the immediate agent, there could be no defects or imperfections in the productions of Nature. But all theſe reaſons ſeem to be deſtitute of any real force; for the idea of operoſe is totally annihilated, when we compare it with Omnipotence. And, whatever was fit for God to create, cannot be unworthy the care of his providence. With reſpect to the defects in natural productions, theſe are the conſequences of general laws, and wiſely intended to exerciſe the art and iduſtry of man, and alſo to ſerve other valuable purpoſes. Should we ſuppoſe it had been better, that ſuch effects had been totally excluded, this muſt have been a good reaſon for the Deity

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to have kept the reigns of government ſolely in his own hands, and altogether to have excluded the agency of imperfect creatures, who might often go wrong. Beſides, as theſe plaſtic natures are ſuppoſed devoid of intelligence, their communicating motion to matter could have no other effect than to produce Epicurus's fortuitous concourſe of atoms; it would ſtill require an intelligent principle to give new motions to matter, in ſuch proper directions as to produce regular effects; and, conſequently, the action of any plaſtic nature would be entirely ſuperfluous. But, as this opinion ſuppoſes the inactivity of matter, it is unneceſſary to inſiſt on any further refutation of it.

Mr Leibnitz, and his followers, have been bold enough to advance this extraordinary opinion, That the univerſe is a piece of divine machinery, which came ſo perfect from the hands of the great Architect, as, in virtue of the original motion communicated to it, to perform all the operations,

and

and accompliſh the deſign it was intended for, without needing any further interpoſition of the ſupreme Creator. But it appears to exceed the powers of the human mind to conceive the poſſibility of ſuch an extraordinary mechaniſm, eſpecially when we conſider how much motion is loſt by the colliſion of bodies, and many other cauſes. And, if there ſhould be any good reaſon for counteracting, in any inſtance, the ordinary courſe of Nature, even ſuch effect muſt be provided for in the original plan of the univerſe, otherwiſe the Deity would put it out of his own power to interpoſe, where wiſdom and goodneſs might require it.

It muſt indeed be allowed, that the works of Nature exhibit a wonderful diſplay of divine art, that an inſcrutable machinery appears through the whole, and a regular and conſtant ſeries of effects connected with one another.

It is this great order of things eſtabliſhed, and uniformly maintained, that lays a foundation for the exerciſe of the ingenuity and

art

art of man, who, from the experience and obſervation of this order, can look forward into the future ſtate of things, and apply his induſtry accordingly.

But it appears to be above all the powers and faculties of man to purſue this curious mechaniſm through its ſeveral links and dependencies, to its original ſource, where mechaniſm ends, and the power of an efficient cauſe muſt take place, and communicate the original motion to the machine. It is conſequently impoſſible for us to know in what inſtances, and how often, the action of the firſt cauſe is neceſſary to preſerve the order of the univerſe.

There is, however, one great and univerſal phaenomenon in Nature, that deſerves a particular attention, and is of great importance in illuſtrating this ſubject, and that is gravity.

A body put in motion proceeds always in a right line, if it meets with no external force to alter its courſe. But gravity is a tendency or motion of one body towards another,

other, in a certain proportion, and the ſingle circumſtance of change of place alters the direction of the motion. Gravity muſt therefore be an original motion, or the continual action of the Supreme Creator upon matter.

Sir Iſaac Newton, indeed, ſuppoſes gravity to be mechanical, and owing to the continual influence of a ſubtile ether. But it ſeems ſcarce poſſible to imagine how ſo fine a fluid could have ſo ſtrong, univerſal, and regular an effect. Beſides, in the ſtrong and regular action upon this ether, we muſt aſcend to the influence of the firſt cauſe. It is therefore more agreeable to the ſimplicity of Nature, and much more obvious to our conception, to conſider gravity as the effect of a continued original impreſſion.

Gravity is one of theſe great laws of Nature upon which the ſyſtem of the world entirely depends. Let this law be deſtroyed or altered in any degree, the whole frame of Nature muſt be diſſolved or deranged. It muſt, therefore, certainly merit the continued

tinued attention and influence of the Deity, in order to prevent ſuch fatal effects.

Since the whole frame and courſe of Nature thus abſolutely depends upon the continual influence of its great Author, the momentary ſuſpenſion of which would produce the greateſt diſorder, if not the total diſſolution of the univerſe, I cannot avoid taking notice of a very extraordinary opinion lately advanced, that the eſtabliſhed courſe of Nature is incompatible with a miracle, and therefore the certain evidence we have from conſtant experience of the firſt, muſt entirely deſtroy the evidence of the laſt. The reverſe of this is true, as muſt appear from firſt principles, with very little reaſoning.

A miracle is allowed to be a violation of the regular courſe of Nature. There muſt, therefore, be an eſtabliſhed courſe of Nature, otherwiſe there could be no violation of it, that is, no miracle. It is equally evident that that power which eſtabliſhed

and

and ſupports the courſe of Nature, can alter or ſuſpend it.

Nothing is of a more natural and eaſy conception than this: But, to affirm that that power which produced and continues the regular operations of Nature, cannot alter or ſuſpend them, is an aſſertion which the mind rejects as perfectly abſurd. It ſeems, therefore, unneceſſary, if not improper, to refute the foreſaid opinion, by a long train of reaſoning, which, if it does not obſcure the ſubject, may yet ſomewhat divert the attention from the principal object, that is, the power of the Deity, to which, if we give a ſteady regard, the poſſibility of a miracle muſt appear in the ſtrongeſt point of light.

There is one opinion concerning the motion of matter which deſerves to be conſidered, becauſe it leads to very abſurd and dangerous concluſions. Matter, ſays ſome, moves by a neceſſity of its own nature, in conſequence of which all its motions muſt proceed in a certain courſe, which it is impoſſible

poſſible can be altered. The abſurdity of this opinion will appear, if we examine the idea of neceſſity. Neceſſity is evidently a circumſtance, or quality of an effect. When we conſider an active being, as having power to produce a certain effect, then, in conſequence of the exertion of this power, the effect muſt of neceſſity exiſt. God ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light. Such an effect could not reſiſt the exertion of Omnipotence. And this neceſſity is applicable to the production of every effect whatever.

Neceſſity, when applied to the eternal exiſtence of the Deity, is without cauſe, is applicable to God alone, and is an object too ſublime for our imperfect faculties.

The motions of the material world are neceſſary, becauſe produced by a powerful cauſe very different from matter. At the ſame time, ſuch cauſe is under no neceſſity to exert its power, or continue ſuch exertion.

In the action of the cauſe, therefore, there is nothing that in the leaſt ſuggeſts any idea of neceſſity; it acts from within itſelf, uninfluenced by any external power; and the quality attending its action is called Liberty, as different from neceſſity as action is from paſſion.

Agreeably to this principle, the motions of the material world, as they are the neceſſary conſequence of the exertion of active power, ſo the ſuſpenſion of that power, at leaſt its counteraction, could ſtop the whole motions of the univerſe, or entirely alter their directions and forms.

And although we muſt ſuppoſe that the Deity does every thing for the beſt reaſons, yet this cannot occaſion any diminution of his liberty, an eſſential property of an active being; otherwiſe the Deity would be leſs free than weak, imperfect mortals, who heſitate and doubt, and often form wrong concluſions, and purſue improper meaſures.

Beſides, wiſdom is not an active, but a directing principle; it cannot, therefore,

neceſſitate

neceſſitate active power, otherwiſe itſelf would be the proper principle of action, and the true efficient cauſe, to which no neceſſity could poſſibly be applicable. This, however, would be to confound power and wiſdom, and make them one and the ſame thing. But, though there is a manifeſt diſtinction betwixt wiſdom and power, yet ſtill it is true, that all the motions of matter are directed by the Deity to ſerve thoſe purpoſes which his wiſdom repreſented to be the fitteſt.

Any ſuppoſed power in matter to move itſelf, would ſoon involve us in unavoidable contradictions; for, in this caſe, matter would be at the ſame time a cauſe and an effect. If matter was both the mover and the moved, it would at once be active and paſſive; and the very act of exerting its liberty would include the loſs of that quality, and it would be neceſſarily moved the moment it freely moved itſelf. Thus nothing but contradictory ideas can ariſe from

from the ſuppoſition of matter's having power to move itſelf.

We know from experience, that matter put in motion continues to move in a right line, if it meets with no obſtruction. Whether this progreſſive motion is the paſſive effect of the original action, or if it requires the continued influence of the firſt mover, is perhaps not eaſy to determine, nor is it neceſſary in this preſent queſtion; for it is evident that, in either caſe, matter muſt be entirely paſſive.

The truth of the paſſivity of matter is further confirmed by its conſtant ſubjection to particular laws of motion, which it would not be under a neceſſity to obſerve, if it was endued with active power.

Upon the whole, it is evident from all the preceding reaſoning, that this great machine of the univerſe is abſolutely ſubjected to the direction and diſpoſal of the ſupreme Creator, and our conception of this is moſt natural and eaſy, from what we daily experience of the power we have

ourſelves

ourſelves over that part of matter which we have within our reach. We can put it into what form we pleaſe, and indeed can make all the elements ſubſervient to our particular purpoſes. It would therefore be the higheſt preſumption to refuſe this power to the Deity over the whole ſyſtem of matter.

We cannot, indeed, contemplate the formation of this great univerſe, the juſt order and arrangements of all its parts, but we muſt neceſſarily trace its origin in an united principle of wiſdom and power. This great truth is no leſs conſpicuous in the preſervation of the ſyſtem, particularly in the ſucceſſive generations of plants and animals of every kind. Theſe exhibit ſuch a divine art and mechaniſm, that, whilſt we purſue it, we are ſoon loſt in wonder and aſtoniſhment; an aſtoniſhment, however, which, whilſt it obſcures the effect, reflects the greater light upon the divine principle which produces it.

If we turn our eyes from this great object, and abſurdly allow active power to the various

various parts of matter, what muſt be the conſequence? nothing, ſure, but an eternal war of the elements, the unavoidable ſource of endleſs anarchy and confuſion.

It ſeems unneceſſary to purſue this argument any further, as every appearance in Nature concurs in demonſtrating the abſolute ſubjection of the material world to the will and diſpoſal of its great Author; in conſequence of which, this important truth could not fail to animate thoſe beautiful deſcriptions of Nature given us by the moſt celebrated poets of antiquity.

But, as all the efforts of human genius cannot reach that height of truth and beauty to which it is the prerogative of inſpiration to aſcend, the mind, fatigued with a long train of reaſoning, may receive a pleaſing relief from a ſurvey of the divine operations, as they are beautifully repreſented to us in the ſacred writings.

"God ſaid, Let there be light, and there "was light. By the word of the Lord "were the heavens made, and all the hoſts

"of

" of them by the breath of his mouth. He " ſpake, and it was done; he commanded, " and it ſtood faſt. Then the morning " ſtars ſang together, and the ſons of God " ſhouted for joy.

" The Lord is the true God, he is the " living God, and an everlaſting King. He " hath made the earth by his power; he " hath eſtabliſhed the world by his wiſdom; " he hath ſtretched out the heavens by his " diſcretion.

" He hath meaſured the waters in the " hollow of his hand, and meted the hea- " ven with a ſpan, and comprehended the " duſt of the earth in a meaſure, and weigh- " ed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills " in a balance.

" The nations are as a drop of the bucket, " and accounted as the ſmall duſt of the " balance. All nations before him are as " nothing, and they are accounted to him " leſs than nothing, and vanity.

" He removeth the mountains, and they " know not; he ſhaketh the earth out of

" her

" her place, and the pillars thereof trem-
" ble.

" He commandeth the ſun, and it riſeth
" not, and ſealeth up the ſtars.

" He alone ſpreadeth out the heavens,
" and treadeth upon the waves of the ſea.
" Hell is naked before him, and deſtruction
" hath no covering

" He hath compaſſed the waters with
" bounds, until the day and night come to
" an end.

" He gave to the ſea his decree, that the
" waters ſhould not paſs his commandment;
" hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no farther;
" here ſhall thy proud waves be ſtayed.

" The pillars of heaven tremble, and are
" aſtoniſhed at his reproof.

" He made a decree for the rain, and a
" way for the lightening of the thunder.

" Can any underſtand the ſpreading of
" the clouds, or the noiſe of his taber-
" nacle?

" Doeſt thou know the balancing of the
" clouds,

" clouds, the wonderful works of him that
" is perfect in knowledge?

" Before him the earth ſhakes and trem-
" bles, he makes darkneſs his ſecret place.

" The Lord alſo thundered in the hea-
" vens, and the Higheſt gave his voice.

" The voice of the Lord is powerful;
" the voice of the Lord is full of Majeſty.

" The God of glory thundereth; the
" Lord is upon many waters.

" The voice of the Lord breaketh the
" cedars of Lebanon; the Lord ſhaketh the
" wilderneſs of Kadeſh.

" Lo theſe are parts of his ways; but
" how little a portion is heard of him? the
" thunder of his power, who can under-
" ſtand?

" Thus ſaith the Lord to his anointed,
" to Cyrus, I will go before thee, and make
" the crooked places ſtraight. I will break
" in pieces the gates of braſs, and cut in
" ſunder the bars of iron; and I will give
" thee the treaſures of darkneſs, and hidden
" riches of ſecret places.

" I am the Lord, and there is none elſe,
" there is no God beſide me.

" I have ſirnamed, I have girded thee,
" though thou haſt not known me.

" If I aſcend up to heaven, thou art
" there; if I make my bed in hell, behold
" thou art there; if I take the wings of the
" morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt
" parts of the ſea; even there ſhall thy
" hand lead me, and thy right hand ſhall
" hold me. If I ſay darkneſs ſhall cover
" me, even the night ſhall be light about
" me.

" The day is thine, the night is thine;
" thou haſt appointed the ſummer and the
" winter; thou makeſt the outgoings of the
" morning and evening to rejoice.

" Can the vanities of the nations cauſe
" rain? or the heavens themſelves give
" ſhowers? Art not thou he, O Lord our
" God, who haſt made all theſe things?

" He feeds the ravens when they cry;
" and the young lions ſeek their meat from
" God.

" The

" The Lord hath prepared his throne in " the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth o- " ver all.

" The heavens are thine, the earth alſo; " the north and ſouth thou haſt created " them. Tabor and Hermon ſhall rejoice " in thy name.

" He ſtood, and meaſured the earth; he " beheld, and drove aſunder the nations; " the everlaſting mountains were ſcattered; " the perpetual hills did blow; his ways " are everlaſting.

" I ſaw the tents of Cuſhan in affliction, " and the curtain of the land of Midian did " tremble.

" He turneth the ſhadow of death into " the morning, and maketh the day dark " with the night.

" He calleth forth the waters of the ſea, " and poureth them out upon the face of " the earth; the Lord is his name."

Theſe repreſentations of the univerſal power of Providence, are not more remarkable

able for beauty and ſublimity of ſentiment, than for a perfect conformity to ſtrict philoſophic truth.

I ſhall conclude with making a general obſervation, that, in the original formation of things, and before the eſtabliſhment of the courſe of Nature, the great Firſt Cauſe muſt have acted without the uſe of any means whatever; a truth which, in the antient world, Moſes alone ſeems to have been acquainted with. It may be added, that, in any ſupernatural event, ſuch as the univerſal deluge, when there was at leaſt a partial ſuſpenſion of the great law of gravity, the ſame Firſt Cauſe muſt have acted with equal ſimplicity, and reſtored the original courſe of Nature, in ſuch manner as might be moſt agreeable to the general plan of Providence.

This agency of the Deity is a principle which natural philoſophers cannot loſe ſight of without danger of falling into the groſſeſt abſurdities; a principle as certain, as it is certain that matter cannot poſſibly move itſelf.

DIS-

DISSERTATION II.

Of Liberty and Neceſſity.

I Do not mean to enter much further into this intricate diſpute, than to examine a ſhort argument advanced in ſupport of the doctrine of Neceſſity, by a very ingenious writer of the preſent age, in his Sketches of the Hiſtory of Mankind. An argument, however, which ſeems to contain the ſubſtance of what can be ſaid upon the ſubject.

That acute author reaſons in the following manner.

"The external action (ſays he) is deter-
"mined by the will; the will is determined
"by deſire; and deſire by what is agree-
"able or diſagreeable. Here is a chain
"of

" of cauſes and effects, not one link of " which is arbitrary, or under command " of the agent."

In this argument, there appears to be a manifeſt confuſion of ideas. A chain of cauſes and effects, where then is the cauſe? Every link of the chain muſt be an effect, produced by the inſtrumentality of the preceding link; and the proper efficient cauſe muſt be at the head of the chain; but what that is we are not told.

Notwithſtanding this neceſſary concatenation, it is ſuppoſed there is an agent capable of command; and if we could diſcover who this agent was, we could be at no loſs to find out liberty.

But, without making any further obſervations of this ſort, I ſhall confine myſelf to one propoſition, which appears to be moſt material in the preſent queſtion. It is ſuppoſed in the argument, that the will is neceſſarily determined by deſire.

To prove this, our author aſſumes the following propoſition: A man cannot will but

but according to his desire. Yet, though this may be true, we can never from it infer the point in question, viz. that the will is necessarily and irresistibly determined by desire. It is certainly not a self-evident proposition, That, when a man wills, or acts according to desire, he does so necessarily, and could not have done otherwise. And if it is not a self-evident proposition, let us consider how our author proves it. He says it is difficult to imagine a thinking being that has affections and passions, and a desirable end in view, which he can easily accomplish, and yet can fly off, or remain at rest, without any cause, motive, or reason to sway it. Although we should suppose this a matter of difficult conception, it may be not the less true upon that account, as there are many things undoubtedly true, which are yet not easily comprehended by our limited faculties.

However, as the decision of the point in question depends chiefly upon a just idea of the nature of the connection betwixt desire and

and action, that connection will deſerve a particular examination.

In order to carry on our reaſoning with the greater preciſion, it will be proper to inquire into the origin of our ideas of liberty and neceſſity. And it will evidently appear that theſe oppoſite ideas ariſe from the different nature of cauſe and effect.

The idea of neceſſity is ſuggeſted to us in the production of an effect by a proper cauſe. The effect muſt neceſſarily exiſt, and cannot give reſiſtance to the power which produced it. But no idea of this kind can ariſe from the action of the cauſe; that muſt be free, otherwiſe the ſuppoſed cauſe could only be an inſtrument acted upon by a proper cauſe, to which we muſt neceſſarily be led at laſt; for it is a firſt and ſelf-evident principle, that nothing can begin to exiſt without a cauſe. This is an eternal and immutable truth. It is vain, therefore, for the Neceſſitarians to endeavour to obſcure it, by ſuppoſing an infinite chain of what they improperly call cauſes and effects,

effects, and then losing this chain in the boundless extent of eternity. For, as there must be a proper efficient cause at the head of the chain, it cannot possibly be infinite and eternal.

There are many instances of a succession of objects connected together, and which are often compared to a chain, consisting, as it is sometimes said, of an infinite number of links. It may, therefore, appear not an improper digression, to consider this matter in a general way, as it comprehends different cases, particularly that of the generations of men.

In pursuing this imaginary chain, we are not allowed to ascend to the top of it, because that is hid in eternity, as the series of links is supposed infinite. But this usurpation of a Divine prerogative is easily detected, as the supposed chain carries the most certain and evident characters of its temporary duration.

It must be allowed, that every link of the chain once existed, and this existence was

temporary, and, conſequently, had a beginning. If, therefore, every link of the chain was of a temporary nature, the chain itſelf could not poſſibly be eternal. For the idea we form of a chain ariſes from the connection of its ſeveral links; now, it is altogether abſurd to affirm, that things of a temporary nature can, from the ſingle circumſtance of their being connected together, produce ſomething that is eternal.

Eternity is the grandeſt object that can be preſented to the mind of man, and is, indeed, altogether incomprehenſible; but we can eaſily conceive a connection of ſucceſſive objects, and, therefore, ſuch connection has not the leaſt reſemblance of eternity.

In a matter ſo perfectly clear, any further reaſoning may appear ſuperfluous; we ſhall, however, ſuppoſe, that ſome one link of our imaginary chain was eternal; the ſuppoſition itſelf is manifeſtly abſurd; for what is eternal is totally diſſimilar to what is temporary,

porary, and is, indeed, removed at an infinite diſtance from it.

Nothing, therefore, can be more evident, than that, in the chain ſuppoſed, there muſt be a firſt link.

To apply this truth to the generations of men above mentioned, there muſt have been, originally, at leaſt one pair; and any more than one pair may appear ſuperfluous, as that was ſufficient, in a ſhort period of time, to people the whole globe.

There muſt, indeed, have been this difference betwixt the firſt link of this chain, and the ſubſequent links, that the firſt pair muſt have been created (for I can uſe no other term conſiſtently with common ſenſe) in a ſtate of maturity, as they could have no parents to ſupport them in a helpleſs ſtate of infancy.

The preceding obſervations will likewiſe enable us to explain our author's chain of what he improperly calls cauſes and effects; for they are all equally inſtruments, or means, and no more; and the connection betwixt

betwixt them is rendered neceſſary by the power of that efficient cauſe, which we muſt at laſt diſcover when we have arrived at the firſt link of the chain; and this is the agent, the idea of which our author cannot avoid, which acts not only upon the firſt link, but all the ſubſequent links of this chain, and is the cauſe of that neceſſity in the effect, which cannot be applied to the agent itſelf.

For it is the influence, or power of the agent, exerting itſelf in the production of an effect, which is the cauſe of that neceſſity which we diſcover in the exiſtence of an effect; but, as there is nothing which acts upon an efficient cauſe as ſuch, the only ſource of our idea of neceſſity is removed, and its action muſt be free.

If we therefore give a proper attention to the origin of our ideas of liberty and neceſſity, we ſhall find no difficulty in explaining the connection betwixt deſire, the will, and exertion of active power.

Such

Such connection may be natural, or what Cicero, in reaſoning upon this ſubject, calls caſual, but cannot be neceſſary.

Deſire may influence or engage the will to comply with its ſolicitation, but cannot neceſſarily determine it. So that, when we do comply with the influence of deſire, we are conſcious of a power that could have reſiſted it.

The power of acting is never conſidered as ſeated in deſire, a paſſive quality of the heart, but is one of the great faculties of the ſoul. In virtue of this faculty, we check, moderate, and govern all our paſſions and deſires: Theſe are the obedient ſubjects of this faculty, and not its maſters; they may engage, but cannot command. This important faculty is the agent which our author is obliged to ſuppoſe has the right to command.

This account given of liberty is confirmed by every view we can take of human nature.

Upon the ſuppoſition that we have a power either to reſiſt or comply with our parti-

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cular deſires, the characters of men are aſcertained and diſtinguiſhed. If we comply with every low, improper, or irregular deſires which may be excited in our breaſts, the character muſt be mean, vicious, and irrational. Whereas, if, reſiſting ſuch deſires, we ſhall comply only with ſuch as lead us to the nobleſt objects, the character will then be manly, virtuous, and rational. And that there is ſuch a diverſity of characters among men, is known from univerſal experience.

On the other hand, if we ſhall ſuppoſe that men are under the abſolute dominion of deſires, and motives which they have no power to reſiſt, they could have no character at all, but would be the ſport of irregular, and often contradictory impulſes. In this caſe, our ideas and our language muſt all be reverſed. We cannot ſay we have done any thing good or bad, but were employed as inſtruments by ſome powerful cauſe to produce theſe effects. Nay, it will appear hardly poſſible to keep ſo ſtrong a guard

guard againſt the influence of common ſenſe, as, inſtead of ſaying ſuch a perſon had done a great or virtuous action, to ſay, that he was employed merely as an inſtrument for that purpoſe, by ſome proper, but unknown cauſe, to which all the merit of the action is to be aſcribed.

Thus the whole language of hiſtory muſt undergo a total change; in which caſe hiſtory would become unintelligible, by ſubſtituting, in place of human actions and characters, ſuch as could be only applicable to ſome obſcure and unknown beings, who made ſuch uſe of the human mind as a muſician does of his muſical inſtruments.

This imaginary notion of abſolute neceſſity ſpreads confuſion and contradiction through all our faculties. It repreſents the mind as purely paſſive, and neceſſarily determined by the motive. Yet, as the motive is but a quality, or affection of the mind, what is done by means of a quality the mind is poſſeſſed of, may, with ſtrict propriety, be applied to the mind itſelf. And thus we

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are involved in this contradictory concluſion, that the mind is, at the ſame time, active, and purely paſſive.

One ſhould think it very obvious to perceive, that the mind acts independently of any neceſſary influence of motives, by conſidering the caſe of two contrary motives in every reſpect equipotent; a caſe, however rare, yet, as it is poſſible, is a juſt foundation of argument. And, in this caſe, the mind, naturally delighting in action, will make an election without being determined by a propellent motive.

But let us carry our views higher to the Supreme Creator. Although he always acts upon the beſt reaſons, yet his actions are nevertheleſs free, as proceeding altogether from himſelf. To ſuppoſe it otherwiſe, would be giving leſs freedom to the Deity than to ſuch dependent creatures as we are. For God ſees immediately what is fitteſt and beſt, and acts accordingly without any heſitation; whereas we doubt, and deliberate, and ſuſpend action till we have examined

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its tendency, and the object we mean to purſue, the value of which we often alſo miſtake. Conſequently, we are leſs effectually influenced by reaſons and motives than the Deity; yet, ſurely, it would be abſurd, if not impious, to affirm, that, for that reaſon, creatures who are dependent upon the Deity for the exerciſe of their active powers, are more free than God himſelf. One ſhould think that the whole of this diſpute ſhould be brought to an eaſy and determinate iſſue, by giving a proper attention to the manifeſt difference which there is betwixt the influence of a motive, and the effect of the exertion of active power.

Let us conſider this diſtinction in reference to the Deity. God ſaid, Let their be light, and there was light. The neceſſity of the exiſtence of light was the unavoidable conſequence of the exertion of Omnipotence. That there was a good reaſon, or juſt motive for ſuch exertion, cannot be doubted; but then, though there was a neceſſary connection betwixt ſuch exertion

and its effect, yet there could not be the ſame connection betwixt the exertion and the motive; ſuch connection might be real, but it could not be neceſſary, otherwiſe Omnipotence would be but a paſſive effect, and we muſt ſtill be left to inquire into that more than Omnipotent cauſe which produced it.

The confuſion of our ideas, and our endleſs diſputes with regard to this important article, ſeem to ariſe from our imperfect knowledge of the human mind.

Hence it is that we have not an immediate and diſtinct view of the connection betwixt a motive, and the exertion of active power; but, by taking different indirect views of this exertion, we may clearly diſcover the connection not to be neceſſary.

We can eaſily conceive a motive of action when there is no power to act at all, in which caſe no effect can be produced.

The principle, therefore, which produces an effect, or a proper efficient cauſe, is quite diſtinct from a motive of action. The

power

power which produces the effect reſides in the efficient cauſe, and can by no means be applied to the motive; and, as it is evidently an active power, it cannot be under any neceſſary determination of the motive.

If we ſhould ſuppoſe a motive to be the original, and proper cauſe of action, then the power of acting, one of the great conſtituent faculties of the mind, muſt be tranſferred to the motive.

Further, as it is the underſtanding which gives a regular direction to action, and is eſſential to a rational agent, we muſt tranſfer this faculty alſo to the motive, that it may be able to act in a proper manner; for, without intelligence, its action would be very irregular.

Thus, in every motive which exiſts in the mind, we may diſcover a new ſoul, poſſeſſed of its entire conſtituent faculties.

This, with the many other abſurdities which flow from the doctrine of neceſſity, may be eaſily avoided by the obvious, and natural diſtinction, of the influence of a motive,

motive, which may be ineffectual, and its neceſſary determination, the effect of which muſt be unavoidable.

Experience ſufficiently convinces us, that the mind is poſſeſſed of active power, which may enable us to check, to controul, and regulate all our deſires and affections. Whatever plan of life we may purſue, there is ſome object, or end, which we propoſe to obtain. Let this be called happineſs in general. It may be allowed, that the deſire of this object is equal in all. It muſt, at the ſame time, be allowed, that different perſons diſcover very different degrees of ſtrength of mind in purſuing the ſame object. Some men perſevere with more conſtancy in the uſe of means, others meet the dangers, or bear the diſtreſſes to which they are expoſed, with very different degrees of fortitude. That power in the mind, therefore, which is the principle of action, is very different in, or very differently exerted by different perſons, and not at all proportioned to the deſire of an end, which may be a motive

tive of action equal in all. The active power, therefore, muſt be in the mind diſtinct from the motive.

The origin, indeed, of active power, and the mode of its exertion, is, like the nature of the mind itſelf, hid in darkneſs, impenetrable to our weak ſight. In vain would we draw it out of its obſcurity by the ſubtlety of metaphyſics; and we need not wonder, if, by the narrow ſphere of our reaſoning, whilſt we pretend to explain the nature and ſource of active power, we take away that power altogether, and render the mind totally paſſive.

But it is unneceſſary to reaſon when we can come at knowledge in an eaſier and more ſatisfactory manner. Though we cannot explain the ſource and origin of liberty, or active power, yet its reality and exiſtence we know by an immediate conſciouſneſs, the ſureſt and ſtrongeſt ſource of evidence we are capable of.

Poſſeſſed of ſuch evidence of its active power, the mind has no occaſion to ſearch for

for it in the obſcure regions of philoſophy; it immediately feels its force, and is conſcious, when it does any action, it could have omitted it.

A deſirable object may therefore influence, but cannot neceſſarily determine the will. The connection, in this caſe, may be called natural, but cannot be neceſſary. Notwithſtanding ſuch connection, we are conſcious of liberty, or a power to govern and controul our inclinations and deſires; from the due government of which, the rectitude of our conduct proceeds; for which conduct, therefore, as being properly our own, we naturally conſider ourſelves as accountable.

This ſenſe of liberty is the hinge upon which the whole ſyſtem of human affairs turns; it is the ſole foundation of government and laws; it enters into all the moral ſentiments of the heart, and judgments of the mind; and if we ſhould exclude it totally from our ideas, our language would become unintelligible.

This

This conſciouſneſs of liberty the author above mentioned candidly admits would be fatal to his ſyſtem, if he was not able to give a conſiſtent account of it.

Accordingly, in the caſe of remorſe for a crime committed, which ariſes from this perſuaſion, that it was in our own power not to have done the deed; this perſuaſion, in his opinion, contrary to truth, he aſcribes to the irregular influence of violent paſſions, which agitate and diſorder the mind upon the immediate commiſſion of a crime; but, when paſſion is ſucceeded by cool reflection, ſuch reflection will ſhow us that we could not have done otherwiſe.

But the reverſe of this will evidently appear to be the truth, from the nature of that important principle we call Conſcience.

Moraliſts diſtinguiſh conſcience into antecedent and ſubſequent conſcience. The firſt precedes the criminal act, and the other is poſterior to it.

Antecedent conſcience is greatly weakened, ſometimes entirely ſilenced, by the violence

violence of that paſſion, which prompts to the commiſſion of a crime, and which immediately diſpoſes us to juſtify what it hurries us to commit.

It is only when time abates the force of paſſion, and makes way for cool reflection, that conſcience recovers its authority, and meeting now with no oppoſition, torments the mind with remorſe, and guilty fear, and ſtill continues to haunt our ſolitary hours long after the commiſſion of the crime, as was the caſe of Joſeph's brethren, quoted by our author.

Philoſophers, indeed, in conſequence of erroneous principles, may ſometimes be led into this abſurd opinion, that men could not poſſibly do otherwiſe than they actually do. But a plea of ſuch neceſſity, preferred by a criminal, would be regarded, in a court of juſtice, as an inſult, and even be treated with ridicule by every plain man of common ſenſe.

In reaſoning we find great employment for our rational faculty; and though, if we reaſon

reaſon juſtly, we cannot ſee things otherwiſe than they really are, yet, in the diſcovery of the premiſſes, or principles of our reaſoning, we are often conſcious of a ſtrong exertion of the active power of the mind. If we ſhould ſuppoſe theſe premiſſes forced upon us by ſome external cauſe, let this cauſe be the Deity, then the reaſoning muſt always be juſt, becauſe Divine. But, let the cauſe be ſome created being, the reaſoning cannot be our own, but muſt be aſcribed to its proper cauſe.

Thus, we never can be ſaid to reaſon, but the reaſoning (which yet we have a conſciouſneſs is our own) is, in reality, the proceſs of ſome other being, whom we know little or nothing about.

All this embarraſſment, and confuſion of our ideas, is eaſily avoided by an obvious, and natural ſuppoſition, that the influence of motives is not neceſſary, but that we could have reſiſted them, even when we yield to them; a ſuppoſition the more eaſily to be allowed, when we conſider how often we

proceed in our actions, upon the very slightest motives, to which it would be absurd to give the force of an irresistible efficient cause. This would likewise involve the absurdity of confounding a final and efficient cause, of putting the reason of producing an effect, in place of that active power which produced it.

Upon the whole, liberty is the key which opens up all the faculties of the human mind, and places them in a clear, consistent, and distinct point of light; whereas necessity involves the whole human system in darkness and confusion, and extinguishes all those active powers, of which we are yet intimately conscious. And it is vain to soften the rigour of necessity, by applying to it the epithet of moral, for it is still irresistible necessity, and absolutely exclusive of any power of acting. The epithet of moral, indeed, seems to be very improperly applied to a principle which must extinguish morality altogether.

There

There is, however, one objection to the doctrine of liberty, of too great importance to be overlooked, as it, perhaps, has been the real source of all our disputes upon this important subject.

It may be said, that, if the actions of men are free, then they cannot be foreseen, even by the Deity; and they may prove so irregular and disorderly as to obstruct and disappoint the wise and good ends of the Divine government. It might appear presumption to enter too minutely into a subject so sublime; I shall therefore only make a few general observations.

Whatever actions shall really be done by men, or any other intelligent creatures, it must be true of them from all eternity that they would be performed. Now, this eternal truth may be an object suited to the omniscience of an Eternal Being; and the foreknowledge of the Deity has no greater influence upon the actions of men, than the abstract truth itself, which is equally applicable to the actions of the Deity. We cannot,

not, indeed, conceive how this amazing effect of omniſcience is produced; but we can as little conceive the effects of any of the Divine attributes.

The production of real exiſtences from abſolute nothing, is as diſproportioned to our comprehenſion, as is our finite nature to the eternal exiſtence of the Deity, a truth, however, ſupported by irreſiſtible evidence. Eternity, indeed, is an object which mocks our ſcanty thought. From the changes which we obſerve in ourſelves, and all objects around us, we are accuſtomed to the idea of ſucceſſive duration; but the eternal duration of an unchangeable being is an object diſproportioned to our capacity, and confounds the ſtrongeſt efforts of the mind.

Eternity is incompatible with change, or ſucceſſion, and ſeems to unite the paſt, preſent, and to come, or rather to annihilate theſe diſtinctions altogether.

Iſaiah gives us a repreſentation of the Deity no leſs true than it is grand and ſublime. 'He is the high and lofty one who

'inhabiteth

'inhabiteth eternity, who poſſeſſes it as it 'were all at once.' And from the unchangeable, as well as the eternal nature of the Deity, he is incapable of acquiring any new knowledge of human actions, or of any thing elſe whatever.

If we believe St Paul, the foreknowledge of God is the foundation of his decrees, which, perhaps, we may conſider according to philoſophic truth, not as relative to future actions, but as determinations upon actions immediately preſent to the all ſeeing eye of God. But I am ſenſible I am unawares engaged in a ſpeculation too intricate and ſublime for creatures who came into being but yeſterday. Modeſty would adviſe to conſider the wiſdom and rectitude of the Divine government as an object of faith rather than of reaſon; a faith, however, which is ſupported, though by general, yet moſt indubitable principles. For it is moſt reaſonable to believe the perfect rectitude of the Divine adminiſtration, notwithſtanding our imperfect knowledge of it. Nay, it

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is equally reaſonable to believe the great plan of Providence to be an object ſo complex and extenſive, as to be, in a great meaſure, diſproportioned to our very limited faculty. And, indeed, this object is rendered ſo much the more Divine, as it is perfectly compatible with the liberty of moral agents.

DISSER-

DISSERTATION III.

Of the Foundation of Moral Obligation.

PART I.

THE ſubject of the ſcience of morals is of a very extenſive nature. All the powers and faculties of the human mind, and the ſeveral ſentiments and affections of the heart, with their various modifications, fall under the cogniſance of this ſcience. It likewiſe examines every ſource of pleaſure and enjoyment, every object that can excite deſire or averſion.

In a ſubject ſo very copious and complex, we cannot be ſurpriſed if different ſyſtems have been adopted, and a diverſity of opinions has taken place.

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It is too arduous a taſk to engage in ſo large a field of ſpeculation: My deſign, at preſent, is only to examine thoſe principles which are neceſſary to lay a ſolid foundation for the practice of virtue, without which its theory can be of little uſe.

In order to purſue this inquiry with greater preciſion, I ſhall confine myſelf to a few ſimple principles, and ſuch as ſhall not ſeem liable to any manner of doubt. For this reaſon, I ſhall not give any formal definition of virtue, which, by different writers, has been conſidered in different lights. It will be ſufficient to remark ſuch properties of that important quality as are, or muſt be, univerſally acknowledged.

That I may render the reaſoning upon this ſubject ſtill more ſimple, I ſhall confine myſelf chiefly to the idea of public virtue, which is of the greateſt importance, and, by a neceſſary connection with which, private virtue is beſt underſtood, and to which it muſt, indeed, be ſubordinate.

Virtue,

Virtue, then, in this view, muſt be poſſeſſed of this eſſential property, that it has a natural, uniform, and direct tendency, to promote the good or happineſs of ſociety, and that in preference to our own private pleaſures or purſuits, whenever theſe ſtand in a real oppoſition to one another.

It is a neceſſary conſequence of this evident truth, that ſuch a tendency is the proper effect of a firm purpoſe and reſolution eſtabliſhed in the heart, invariably directing our exertions towards that important object. If we ſhall ſometimes exerciſe the virtues of juſtice and humanity, but, at other times, give the preference to our own particular intereſts or pleaſures, our characters muſt be inconſiſtent, and we cannot be deemed virtuous. It is true, the higheſt degree of human virtue is not without abundance of blemiſhes; yet, if the above mentioned diſpoſition has the aſcendant in the heart, it will at leaſt regularly influence the conduct, and ſufficiently aſcertain the character; and

greater perfection may be attained by cultivating the habits of virtue.

But, before we proceed to inquire by what means the virtuous diſpoſition is eſtabliſhed in the heart, we muſt aſcend to a higher object ſtill, whoſe influence is of ſuch importance as muſt govern and direct the whole train of our reaſoning upon the preſent intereſting ſubject, and that is the nature of good, or happineſs in general; for, if virtue did not ultimately lead us to happineſs, no precepts, no arguments, could ever perſuade us to the practice of it.

Happineſs is a thing that is rather felt than can be defined; it, however, denotes a ſtate of mind in which we are ſatisfied and pleaſed; it is, therefore, the natural, and even neceſſary object of deſire; and the greater we apprehend it to be, our deſire of it muſt increaſe in proportion.

It is a truth that never was, nor, indeed, ever can be called in queſtion, that every human being muſt deſire the happineſs of his

his particular nature, and have an averſion to its miſery.

The ſource of happineſs is called good; and there are goods of various and different kinds with which individuals are very differently affected. This diverſity of their ſentiments and affections, partly ariſes from a difference in their original conſtitution, but very often from a neglect of a due examination of the objects of purſuit.

It was the great object of philoſophy to remedy the errors of mankind in a matter of ſo great importance, and to point out the true road to happineſs.

The firſt, and great inquiry of all the antient philoſophers was, not whether happineſs was to be choſen above all things, for that could not admit of a doubt, but what was the *ſummum bonum*, or proper ſource of our trueſt happineſs?

Their opinions in this matter were indeed very different, according to the different views they had formed of the general ſyſtem of Nature.

Epicurus,

Epicurus, who rejected order and design from the universe, and excluded a Providence altogether, was reduced to a mean and sordid idea of happiness, deriving its origin from sensual pleasure, or, at best, a state of ease and tranquillity. He was obliged, therefore, to proscribe virtue altogether, or, by making it a servile minister of ease, or pleasure, in reality, to convert it into mere artifice or hypocrisy.

The other sects of philosophers, excepting the Stoics, made virtue the chief source of our happiness, but thought the addition of sundry other goods likewise necessary.

The Stoics made virtue alone our chief good; and, though other things were eligible, yet they were, in reality, of little or no moment as to the true and complete happiness of our nature.

But this was carrying virtue to a sublime height, to which reason could not accompany her.

It is, indeed, so contrary to the universal feelings of mankind, that it can gain little credit;

credit; and few will believe Seneca, when he would perſuade us, that Scaevola was happier when he thruſt his hand into the fire, than if he had put it into his miſtreſs's boſom.

This enthuſiaſm of the Stoics was poſſibly occaſioned by abſtracting from the feelings of the virtuous ſufferer, and regarding only the happy tendency of his temper or conduct.

Self-love, however, will never allow an individual to ſacrifice his own happineſs, even to the general good of mankind. The arduous atchievements of virtue muſt have a proper motive of good to ſupport them, otherwiſe the ſuperior principle of ſelf-love will entirely obſtruct their exertion.

This principle of ſelf-love is of that importance as to deſerve a particular conſideration. Some philoſophers, whilſt they reſolve all human actions into the principle of ſelf-love, ſeem, at the ſame time, to think this to be inconſiſtent with the true and generous ſpirit of virtue. This, however,

ſeems

ſeems to ariſe from ſome miſtaken apprehenſion of this principle.

Self-love may admit of two very different ſenſes. It may ſignify the good opinion and eſteem we have of ourſelves, in reſpect of certain good qualities of which we are poſſeſſed, or imagine ourſelves poſſeſſed. This ſpecies of ſelf-love, if ill founded, receives the name of vanity, and, if carried too far, may be the ſource of much injuſtice.

It is, however, by no means a ſupreme principle in our nature. We will often love and admire that virtue in others, whilſt we have a humiliating conſciouſneſs of the defect of it in ourſelves.

And though, in ſome caſes, where the difference may not be great, ſelf partiality may annihilate that difference; yet if, with candour, we enter into our own hearts, we may be able to do juſtice to others, in compariſon with ourſelves.

But there is another ſpecies of ſelf-love very different from the former, and that is,

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the desire which each individual has of the happiness and perfection of his nature.

This is a principle supreme in our nature, and immutable in itself: And it is so far from being adverse to virtue, that it is calculated to give it its greatest support.

A desire of happiness, in itself, however, cannot make us happy. Our happiness immediately flows from the pleasing exercise of our affections, in the enjoyment of such objects as are agreeable to these.

Our affections are of two kinds, social and selfish.

The social affections lead us to pursue the good of others, such as justice, benevolence, friendship, generosity, and patriotism.

The selfish affections terminate in ourselves, and have no relation to the good of others, such as vanity, ambition, avarice, and the love of sensual pleasure.

Our affections are not the creatures of self-love; they depend upon the particular fabric and constitution of the heart; and all that self-love has to do, is to make an elec-

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tion, and give the preference to thoſe affections whoſe objects give us the higheſt enjoyment.

The difference betwixt virtue and vice does not immediately depend upon ſelf-love, but upon the nature and character of our affections, which are the immediate principles of action.

It can, therefore, be no diſparagement to virtue, when it is allowed ultimately to proceed from ſelf-love; for this muſt, and ought to be the caſe, if it is, in reality, either our chief good, or the neceſſary means to attain that ultimate end.

Vanity, ambition, ſenſuality, and other ſelfiſh affections, are often ſuppoſed to have a peculiar connection with ſelf-love; but this is without any juſt foundation; for, though they conſtitute what is called a ſelfiſh character, yet ſelfiſhneſs and ſelf-love are very different things. Selfiſhneſs denotes the prevalence of ſelfiſh over ſocial affections. Self-love is a general principle, relative to the one ſet of affections as well

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as the other, and rational ſelf-love will give the preference to virtue. Thus it is very juſtly obſerved by Ariſtotle *, that the man who follows virtue under the direction of reaſon, may, with much greater propriety, be ſaid to love himſelf, than a perſon who is under the dominion of evil and irregular paſſions.

It muſt, however, be acknowledged, that the prevalence of the ſelfiſh affections is too apparent in human ſociety, and the ſource of all that injuſtice and animoſity which introduce ſo much miſery into this our world.

Yet man is to be conſidered not merely as an individual contracted within himſelf. Though poſſeſſed of all that earth could afford, he could never be happy in a ſolitary ſtate.

Man is formed for ſociety. From his ſocial ſtate his happineſs chiefly flows. This ſtate is the ſource from which he not only derives the communication of all the uſeful

* Ethicks, lib. ix. cap. 8.

and agreeable productions of Nature, but in which alone he can find place for the delightful exercise of friendly and benevolent affections, and than which nothing contributes more to the improvement of the understanding, and the pleasing exercise of the intellectual powers, in order to the discovery of truth.

But all these happy effects of society depend entirely upon the establishment and maintenance of good order amongst its members. This important effect can only be fully accomplished where the selfish are rendered subordinate to the social affections. In this case, every man becomes as a guardian angel to his brother; and the reciprocation of good offices flows in a natural and easy chan l.

This happy state of society is but very imperfectly imitated by the establishment of civil law and government. The natural rectitude of the heart is a more noble, and more certain source of good, than an involuntary

luntary ſubmiſſion to the authority of civil law.

Virtue alone is that noble principle which raiſes the ſocial above the ſelfiſh affections, which thereby excludes all the ills, which are the fatal effects of the dominion of this laſt ſet of affections, and opens up the ſprings of bleſſings to mankind.

This happy and deſirable power of virtue can only be obtained by its perfect union and agreement with ſelf-love, an effect natural in itſelf, though much obſtructed by the violence of ſelfiſh paſſions.

Thoſe who derive all the actions of men from vanity, or ſome other ſelfiſh affection, found their opinion in the general prevalence of ſuch affections. But, if the deſire of happineſs is natural to man, ſuch prevalence muſt be unnatural, and even a contradiction in our nature; for, in thus purſuing happineſs, we dry up the chief ſource from whence it flows.

There are undoubtedly public affections, and virtuous principles in human nature, which,

which, though weak, are yet capable of the greateſt improvement. And there is this very material foundation for ſuch improvement, that thereby the happineſs of ſociety, in which every one has an intereſt, is proportionally increaſed.

Such a beautiful, ſuch a very pleaſing idea of human happineſs, is excited in the mind, from the contemplation of an univerſal practice of virtue, that in this idea we might perhaps find a ſufficient counterpoiſe againſt the irregularity of all the ſelfiſh affections: But there is one circumſtance, chiefly, which obſtructs this happy effect. The true happineſs of ſociety cannot ariſe from the beſt conduct of one, or a few individuals: A general concurrence of all the united members is neceſſary to obtain this important end. As ſuch concurrence, therefore, is not to be expected, this ſpring of action muſt loſe the greateſt part of its force.

From the obſervations hitherto made, it muſt appear evident beyond all doubt, that,

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in order to eſtabliſh a ſolid foundation for the practice of virtue, it muſt be perfectly united with ſelf-love, that is, it muſt appear either to be our chief good, or the neceſſary means of obtaining that great ultimate end.

For, if any other object whatever ſhould appear to be our chief good, the cauſe of virtue, and, conſequently, the happineſs of mankind, would be rendered quite deſperate.

It is therefore the great province of moral philoſophy to examine thoſe principles of the human heart which are moſt friendly to virtue, from the proper improvement of which, that amiable and important quality may gain a full authority over the conduct, and be moſt effectually united to ſelf-love.

In this inquiry, it will only be neceſſary to examine ſome of the moſt conſpicuous principles of action, as the reaſoning in relation to theſe will eaſily be applicable to others of inferior influence.

One of the moſt powerful principles in human nature is a ſenſe of honour. Its object

ject is the eſteem and good opinion of thoſe who are aſſociated with us, and this object is moſt effectually gained by the practice of virtue. A regular and conſtant courſe of public ſervices and good offices cannot fail to gain the approbation, and even applauſe, of every one who has acceſs to obſerve them; and ſuch applauſe is an eaſy price, and ſmall recompenſe, for a conduct ſo beneficial and meritorious. Yet, for this recompenſe, men will often expoſe themſelves to the greateſt dangers and fatigues. The principle of honour will often riſe above the love of life itſelf. It will even rouſe the diſſolute and the diſſipated to exchange the pillow of ſloth for the bed of honour.

But, though this principle is of powerful energy, and commonly coincides and concurs with the principle of virtue, yet, as it depends upon the opinions of mankind, whenever theſe are depraved, honour will forſake the paths of virtue, and deſert to the quarters of vice, an effect which ſome ſuperior principle of virtue only can prevent.

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Such a degree of virtue we have an inſtance of in the caſe of Socrates. He was but too ſucceſsfully expoſed to the ridicule and contempt of the bulk of his countrymen by the profligate Ariſtophanes. His firm virtue, however, ſupported him in this ſevere trial, in oppoſition to the principle of honour; and the dignity of his mind appears with a peculiar luſtre in the eyes of wiſe and good men, whilſt the Comedy of the Clouds tranſmits the name of Ariſtophanes with infamy to future generations.

There is another defect in the principle of honour. As it relates only to ſuch actions as fall under public view, it leaves the heart, the proper ſeat of virtue, altogether unguarded, attends virtue in her public walks only, but has no influence upon ſuch actions as eſcape human obſervation.

There is a ſpecies of honour of a more private nature, which reſpects the opinion a perſon has of his own character and conduct; this is the ſource of a certain dignity of mind, which leads us to avoid every thing

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mean and unworthy, or which bears any mark of moral turpitude.

This ſpecies of honour is of greater extent than the former, as it relates to the inward diſpoſitions of the heart, as well as the outward conduct; it is not, however, of equal power; and, though it may lend its aid to the principle of virtue, yet it is not, in itſelf, ſufficient for its uniform and arduous exertions.

There is another principle in our nature upon which the greateſt ſtreſs has been laid, that is, benevolence; its object, indeed, is the ſame with that of virtue, or the good of others. This identity of the object ſeems to have made theſe two principles to be conſidered by ſome as one and the ſame.

Doctor Hutcheſon, in particular, too much influenced, perhaps, by the goodneſs of his own heart, maintained, that the calm principle of general benevolence is the proper ſource of virtue, which is ſo much independent on ſelf-love, that no view of ſelf-intereſt mixing with it, not even the pleaſing re-

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flection upon our conduct can increaſe our approbation. And this his opinion he ſupports upon the authority of the moral ſenſe. But this his opinion, together with the authority of the moral ſenſe which is made to ſupport it, will merit ſome examination.

It muſt be admitted, that benevolence is a virtuous affection, leading us directly to promote the good of others, and, though it is too narrow a foundation for the ſupport of univerſal virtue, yet, as it may appear of an equal extent with ſocial virtue, which I am chiefly conſidering, I ſhall examine it only as a principle of action, and how far it has a ſufficient power to ſupport us in an uniform practice of virtue.

Benevolence, as has been already obſerved, ſtands in no peculiar oppoſition to ſelf-love; theſe principles, though their objects are very different, are capable of being perfectly united; but we ſhall never be able to diſcover in benevolence alone a power ſufficient to unite them.

Benevolence meets with great oppoſition from all thoſe paſſions and affections which bind us ſtrongly to objects often inconſiſtent with, and even altogether ſubverſive of virtue.

Hiſtory, indeed, furniſhes us with ſome inſtances of friendſhip and patriotiſm which ſeem to have riſen ſuperior to every other principle of our nature. But, whilſt we admire ſuch extraordinary inſtances of virtue, we muſt be ſenſible of the inſtability of the inſtinctive principle upon which they are founded.

It would be but painful to enter into the hiſtory of mankind for proof of the prevalence of ſelfiſh and unfriendly paſſions; we would only have to regret the weakneſs of benevolence when contending with ſuch powerful antagoniſts.

This amiable affection too much reſembles a beautiful flower in ſpring, which is apt to languiſh and decay under the rigour of an inclement ſky.

Not only oppoſite paſſions counteract the influence of benevolence; it has the ſeeds of weakneſs in its original conſtitution. It depends much upon the temper of the mind, the mood, and frame of ſpirits we find ourſelves in; and, as this temper is liable to many variations, benevolence muſt be ſubjected to the ſame variations, and, therefore, cannot be an uniform and ſteady principle.

Benevolence is alſo a blind principle; it miſtakes its objects, and often exerts its influence where a degree of ſeverity would be much more proper.

Thus it is frequently an imprudent indulgence in a parent, a weakneſs unſuitable to the character of a judge, and, in a magiſtrate, a relaxation of that authority which is neceſſary to obtain the true ends of government.

Benevolence, therefore, ſtands in need of reaſon to aſcertain the proper objects to which it muſt be directed. It ſtands much more in need of the concurrence of ſelf-

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love to assemble all the powers of the soul in its support.

This will appear in the strongest light, if we attend to the arduous atchievements of virtue.

Plato observes, that a just man will submit to every possible distress in life, and even at last be crucified, rather than renounce his virtue; and Cicero delivers his opinion much to the same purpose.

But the doctrine of the Stoics rises to an elevation that appears almost divine: That a just man should be so far from repining at any circumstances of distress in which he may be involved, that he should acquiesce in them with satisfaction, as in the circumstances found most proper for him by the wise and gracious Ruler of the World. And it appears, indeed, from the writings of these philosophers, that the great ground of their support was a firm confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the Deity.

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These high ideas of virtue were not the mere speculations of philosophers, but often exemplified in real life.

The conduct and character of Regulus has been a subject of the highest panegyric. The Roman poets and historians concur in bestowing the greatest encomiums upon the virtue of Cato, though of a severe and uncomplying nature. They sometimes even transcend the bounds of decency, and seem to make him independent of the Deity.

Minutius Felix employs all his eloquence to set the virtue, the patience, and the fortitude of the primitive Christians in the strongest point of light; and he reaches the full height of the true sublime when he makes them yield to an Omnipotent Being alone. *Soli Deo cujus est cedit.*

It must therefore be manifest, that mere benevolence cannot be a sufficient support for the constancy and dignity of virtue; all the powers of the soul must concur in producing those illustrious effects, which excite our admiration as much as our love. And

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reaſon will conclude the rectitude and ſtrength of mind, formed by ſuch concurrence, to be the true and ſolid principle of virtue.

This leads me to conſider the authority of the moral ſenſe, which is made paramount to that of reaſon.

There is, perhaps, no diſquiſition in morals more delicate and ſubtile, than to aſcertain the different provinces of reaſon and ſentiment reſpecting that ſcience.

Not only Doctor Hutcheſon, but other ingenious writers after him, have examined this matter with great attention, and their reaſonings iſſue in this concluſion, that it is the moral ſenſe, or faculty, that can alone diſcern the original forms of virtue and vice; that reaſon muſt therefore ſubmit to the deciſions of this principle; and that the ſole province of this enlightened faculty is to collect the particular deciſions of the moral ſenſe, and form them into general propoſitions, from which it may deduce ſeparate

concluſions *. I ſhall conſider this matter in the ſimpleſt view, excluding every circumſtance not neceſſary to the argument.

The queſtion is, what is virtue, or moral goodneſs? The anſwer, according to the foregoing opinion, is, whatever the moral ſenſe approves of as ſuch. It is indeed certain, that the beauty, and pleaſing form of virtue, is perceived only by a certain ſenſe, and quite without the province of reaſon; but this is not peculiar to moral ideas; the whole of our ideas are derived from different ſources than that of reaſon, which, however, alone, can examine the ſeveral relations of theſe ideas, and thereby diſcover particular truths concerning them. Thus the ideas of a circle, or a ſquare, with the concomitant beauty of their figures, which pleaſes us, have their origin only in ſenſe; but it is reaſon which inveſtigates their properties and relations, and thereby acquires the knowledge of uſeful truths.

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* Mr Smith's Theory, part 6. ſect. 3.

It is the ſame thing with virtue: Its peculiar beauty, and original form, is perceived only by ſenſe; but its greateſt excellence conſiſts in its relation to the happineſs of ſociety, an object not merely recommended by benevolence, but eſſentially connected with the immutable principle of ſelf-love. In virtue, then, there is the relation of an affection, or action, to a certain unalterable object or end; and of this relation reaſon, and not ſentiment, is the proper judge. Wherever, therefore, we diſcover in any action a natural tendency to the good of ſociety, we muſt pronounce ſuch action to be, in that reſpect, morally good; and, if ſentiment ſhould pronounce a different judgment, reaſon would diſcover ſuch judgment to be erroneous.

Let us ſuppoſe ſuch a depraved conſtitution of the moral ſenſe as to approve of a cruel action, or, admitting a leſs degree of depravity, as to approve of a good office done to a friend, inconſiſtent with juſtice due to a ſtranger, or of a ſervice done to

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our country, contrary to the faith of a treaty ſubſiſting with a foreign ſtate. In all theſe caſes, reaſon would clearly diſcover the corruption of the moral ſenſe, and have ſufficient authority to reverſe its deciſions.

Reaſon, indeed, is not an active principle, but it is an enlightened faculty; it is the eye of the mind, which directs the active powers of the ſoul to the true road to happineſs.

Our ſentiments are very much influenced by our paſſions, or led into error from an imperfect view of objects preſented to us. Reaſon alone can remedy theſe bad effects; can alone enable us to ſubdue our paſſions, or preſent objects to our view in a juſt and true light.

In youth, when our reaſon is weak, and our imagination and ſentiments vigorous and lively, we are apt not only to approve of, but to admire the characters and conduct of a hero and a conqueror, of an Alexander and a Caeſar; and we hardly ſee any moral blemiſh in them. But, when age and

experience have corrected our judgment, and we leiſurely reflect upon the motives and ends of their ambitious ſchemes, we totally reverſe our ſentiments, and conſider them as public robbers, and ſcourges of mankind.

In further illuſtration of this ſubject, I ſhall condeſcend upon a few inſtances of the ſtrong power of ſentiment, to which reaſon, however, muſt appear to have a ſuperior authority.

The action of Brutus, in concurring in the death of Caeſar, is generally celebrated as a noble inſtance of public virtue. Even the judicious Monſieur Monteſquieu, in his Riſe and Fall of the Roman Republic, places it in the moſt illuſtrious point of light. In this action, ſays he, virtue ſeems to have forgot herſelf, that ſhe might riſe to a ſuperior height; and, though the action could not be approved of, as it was attrocious, ſhe made it to be admired as divine.

But, if we conſider Brutus's friendſhip with Caeſar, the obligations he was under

to him, and the truſt and confidence which Caeſar repoſed in him, our ſentiments muſt receive a very great alteration, and perhaps we will be ready to apply to him the ſympathetic reflection which Virgil makes upon the firſt Brutus:

Infelix: Utcunque ferent ea facta minores.

Without entering into any diſcuſſion of this caſe, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that, amidſt ſuch a variety and oppoſition of ſtrong ſentiments, it is reaſon alone that can bring it to a clear deciſion, by comparing it with thoſe eſſential rules of conduct, which lead us to the general intereſt and happineſs of mankind.

Again, there is perhaps no ſentiment that has more fired the imagination, and raiſed it to the higheſt pitch of enthuſiaſm, than what is contained in a ſingle line of Lucan:

Victrix cauſa diis placuit, ſed victa Catoni.

I believe, however, cool reaſon will approve of the following juſt and ſenſible criticiſm of Lord Lanſdoun:

> The Roman wit, who impiouſly divides
> His Hero, and his Gods, to different ſides,
> I would condemn, but that, in ſpite of ſenſe,
> Th' admiring world ſtill ſtands in his defence.

Reaſon corrects our ſentiments, not only by abating the fire of paſſion and imagination, but by enabling us to take more clear and extenſive views of things. Sentiment depends much upon the aſſemblage and arrangement of our ideas; and though, in ſimple caſes, the ſentiments of men may be pretty ſimilar, yet, in caſes rendered complex by a variety of relations, the ſentiments of perſons habituated to make extenſive reflections will be very different from thoſe of the vulgar.

By the Roman cuſtoms, the Conſul always walked on foot, preceded by twelve lictors, with their faſces, one after another. In caſe any perſon on horſeback ſhould meet the

the Conſul, it was his duty to diſmount, otherwiſe the lictors obliged him to do ſo. Fabius Maximus, the dictator, who ſaved Rome by his prudent conduct, in his old age uſed to ride out on horſeback. In this manner he happened to meet his ſon, who was at that time Conſul. He rode on; and the lictors, knowing the Conſul's venerable parent, highly reſpected for the great ſervices done his country, allowed him to paſs, without taking any notice of him. He paſſed the eleventh lictor, when the Conſul called out to the twelfth, Lictor, do your duty. Upon this the father immediately diſmounted, and, embracing his ſon, ſaid to him, I only wanted to know whether you underſtood that you was Conſul of Rome.

The ſentiments of theſe wiſe magiſtrates were influenced by the moral and political reflections they made upon the ſuperior duty they owed their country. The ſentiments of the lictors were confined to the preſent appearance of things.

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The obſervations already made muſt ſufficiently demonſtrate the authority of reaſon, and the ſubjection of ſentiment, to that characteriſtical faculty of man.

Dr Hutcheſon, in his illuſtrations of the moral ſenſe, beſtows a great deal of ingenious reaſoning in ſupport of the authority of that ſenſe, as paramount to that of reaſon. It appears unneceſſary to follow him through all the train of his reaſoning, becauſe he admits that there is an ultimate end, to which, therefore, all our actions are referable. This ultimate end in ſociety can be no other than the general happineſs of the community; and, though this is an object which is originally apprehended by ſenſe, yet its immutability is perceived by the intellectual faculty. Reaſon has therefore here a clear field for its exerciſe, and can diſcern the moral fitneſſes and relations with the utmoſt perſpicuity. The relations of truth, juſtice, goodneſs to the happineſs of ſociety, are as clearly perceived as any mathematical relations

tions whatever, and are as immutable as is the object to which they relate.

Virtue is, indeed, inveſted with a peculiar beauty, (which Dr Hutcheſon ſeems to have had chiefly in his view); and this beauty is an object of ſenſe, and not of reaſon. Reaſon, however, can reflect upon this amiable quality of virtue, and inquire into its cauſes and effects. It ſeems chiefly to ariſe from the inſtantaneous view we have of its neceſſary connection with the moſt important of all objects, the happineſs of mankind. Virtue appears alſo to have a ſeparate and peculiar power to pleaſe, the ſource and origin of which it may not be ſo eaſy to trace. Its happy effects, however, are the proper objects of the underſtanding, and which it is eaſy for reaſon to diſcover.

But, though reaſon is the faculty by which alone we can inquire into the nature of virtue, as well as every thing elſe, yet reaſon has ſtill a more important office. The knowledge of virtue, without its practice, is of very little uſe, and can contribute nothing

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at all to the happineſs of ſociety. It belongs, therefore, to reaſon to ſearch for ſufficient motives to engage us to a regular and uniform practice of virtue; ſuch motives muſt ariſe either from immediate good affection, or the proſpect of future good.

Good affection alone cannot be a ſufficient motive of virtue, if we conſider that it is in itſelf variable and inconſtant; whereas virtue muſt be regular and firm. Experience likewiſe perfectly convinces us, that good affection has not a power ſuperior to that of all our other ſelfiſh affections and deſires, which virtue, however, in many caſes, muſt ſtruggle with and overcome. Indeed, whenever virtue is called to encounter uncommon danger or diſtreſs, the mind, fully occupied with a ſenſe of its own important intereſt, can give but little attention to the concerns of others.

But, without attending to the imperfections of good affection, it is not in itſelf a ſufficient principle of virtue.

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The propriety of human conduct consists in this, that it flows from the two great faculties of the soul, the understanding and the will. Where either of these is wanting, our actions cannot be called human, much less virtuous.

This will be illustrated by considering the actions of inferior animals.

The affections and instincts of these animals are more regular and just than those of our own species. The brute animals protect and cherish their young with the greatest care and assiduity, till they are able to do for themselves.

In the republic of bees, each individual bee continually exerts all his industry to increase the common store.

How happy would human society be, if the mere affections of men led them in the same manner to promote the interest of families and their country!

We do not, however, ascribe moral virtue to the inferior animals; this is considered as the privilege of man alone. And the

reaſon of this is abundantly obvious: The inferior animals cannot reflect upon the tendency of their actions, or foreſee their conſequences, much leſs know whether theſe will be good or bad. They very much reſemble machines, rather acted upon, than proper agents. Their actions, therefore, are not imputable to them; nor are they proper ſubjects of praiſe or blame. It is otherwiſe with the actions of men: Reaſon enables them to conſider the tendency and conſequences of their actions; and if theſe ſhall appear bad, they have a power to avoid ſuch actions; which power, if they neglect to exert, the actions are imputable to them, and they are juſtly liable for their conſequences. If a man is, by any misfortune, deprived of the uſe of his reaſon, what ill he may do is not imputable to him; he is an object of pity, but not of blame. Reaſon, therefore, muſt appear to be an eſſential ingredient in the principle of virtue.

This truth will appear in the ſtronger light, if we conſider by what means reaſon influences our conduct.

Reaſon

Reaſon is a contemplative, but not an immediately active principle. Our active powers are put in motion by ſuch views of good as are preſented to the mind. The proſpect of happineſs excites the affections; and theſe engage the active powers of the ſoul in purſuit of it. If the objects of our paſſions and affections were allowed to operate at random, and to produce inſtantly their natural effects, without the paſſport or reſtraint of reaſon, nothing could be more irregular, nor farther removed from the true path of virtue, than the conduct which in this caſe muſt take place.

It is the province of reaſon to prevent ſuch irregularity. This enlightened faculty examines the ſeveral objects of our deſire, reflects upon their preſent power, conſiders their various relations and connections, and anticipates their future conſequences; thus eſtimates the real quantity of happineſs they can beſtow, and gives them the preference accordingly. Thus our conduct will become more regular, but perhaps not much more

more virtuous: For, even in this caſe, our darling paſſions will chiefly influence our conduct, and we will only guard them with more prudence and foreſight, in order to render their indulgence more ſecure and permanent.

The diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of virtue and vice ariſes from the different objects of their purſuit. Selfiſhneſs is the ultimate end of the one, and public happineſs that of the other.

An Epicurean, therefore, though without any ſolid principles of virtue, if his paſſions are moderate, may purſue a very regular plan of life. His health, eaſe, and ſecurity, may render ſuch a plan moſt eligible; and prudence will direct him to cover the ſelfiſh motives of his conduct with a veil of artifice and hypocriſy; whereas truth and ſincerity are the native ornaments of virtue.

A regular Epicurean, however, maintains peace and good order, and is, indeed, a much better member of ſociety, than one who, without any thought, abandons himſelf

ſelf to the dominion of his paſſions; yet this laſt will, in ſome caſes, be excited to do much greater ſervices to the public.

The philoſophic Epicurean makes it his ſtudy to counteract his public affections, where theſe may expoſe him to any ſevere exerciſe of ſelf-denial. The other, having no plan at all, leaves ſuch affections to their natural ſtrength and influence; and their exertion, upon ſome occaſions, may produce very important effects.

Marius was a real Epicure, but not upon principle; by his ſtrong and painful exertions, however, he delivered Rome from the moſt imminent danger. Pomponius Atticus led a very regular life, according to the plan of Epicurus; yet, though it had been in his power to have ſaved his country, he never once would have intended it, becauſe of the danger and difficulty to which he would thereby have been unavoidably expoſed.

Contracted within ourſelves, we muſt be under the dominion of ſelfiſh affections; theſe will give law to our conduct, and have

a ſuperior influence to any virtuous principle in our nature.

Julius Caeſar is repreſented as poſſeſſed of a benevolent and humane diſpoſition; his ambition, however, prevailed over this happy temper, and led him to ſpread ſlaughter and devaſtation over a great part of the globe. He is ſaid to have had the following ſentence of Euripides frequently in his mouth: 'If injuſtice may be done, it is to 'be done for the ſake of a kingdom; in o-'ther matters pay a reſpect to piety.'

Not only the ambitious, the avaricious, the ſenſualiſt, or any perſon of whatever ſelfiſh denomination, will make the ſame exception in behalf of his ruling paſſion, the indulgence of which muſt appear to him to be his chief good, and will accordingly determine his conduct.

Happineſs is the great object of the virtuous man as well as the vicious; but where ſhall we find a good of ſuch peculiar excellence, as may give a conſtant and uniform ſuperiority to the public over the ſelfiſh af-

fections,

fections, and make the regular practice of virtue appear to be our trueſt intereſt and wiſeſt conduct?

The power neceſſary to produce an effect ſo great and ſo illuſtrious, cannot ariſe from ſimple affection; it muſt require the regular and united influence of every principle that can communicate vigour to the mind. As its object is public, extenſive, and complicated, relating to the general happineſs of mankind, we muſt, therefore, find it in a wiſe and regular ſyſtem of nature, or we ſhall find it no where.

In what manner ſuch a ſyſtem will produce ſo happy an effect, is an inquiry of great importance.

PART

PART II.

THERE are two different opinions reſpecting the origin of this great Univerſe.

Epicurus derived this amazing effect from the fortuitous concourſe of atoms. Upon this abſurd hypotheſis, there could be no certain order of things, no neceſſary connection of cauſes and effects, no ſtability in any courſe of nature. Our proſpects into futurity muſt be dark and gloomy, and can preſent no bright and animating object, neceſſary to ſupport the uniform practice of virtue, as well as its more arduous exertions.

Self-love is a principle which binds us to private intereſt, by a natural, and even neceſſary tye. But where ſhall we find, in this melancholy view of things, that important, I had almoſt ſaid, that divine principle

ciple, which may unite us in the ſame manner to the intereſt of others? Such a principle cannot be the effect of deſign, where there is no deſign; and if it ſhould exiſt by chance, it may periſh by the ſame chance, and therefore cannot be a proper ſupport to virtue, which implies a firm and permanent conduct.

So far, indeed, is atheiſm from giving any additional ſupport to virtue, that it has the very contrary effect. Our ſocial affections are the original principles of virtue; and though theſe are weak and inconſtant, yet they are capable of the higheſt improvement. Atheiſm, however, tends to weaken, if not extinguiſh them altogether.

The forlorn and hapleſs proſpect of Nature which atheiſm preſents, as it greatly contracts our views of perſonal intereſt, it makes us almoſt entirely loſe ſight of the intereſt of others. In this dark and gloomy view of things, inſenſible to the intereſt of others, our chief care muſt be to ſeize all

that ſelfiſh pleaſure which any accident may throw in our way.

Epicurus himſelf in effect diſcarded virtue, by making it only the ſervile miniſter of eaſe or pleaſure, which he conſidered as his chief good.

It is true, he recommended virtue in ſo far as it contributed to the health of the body, the tranquillity of the mind, or our peace and ſecurity in ſocial life.

But ſuch virtue, derived from motives purely ſelfiſh, could be no virtue at all. And Cicero juſtly obſerves, that an Epicurean, acting upon his own principles, could not practiſe the ſocial virtues of friendſhip, juſtice, and beneficence; nay, that he would be thereby led to the moſt immoral conduct, inſomuch that, if he obſerved a relation (by whoſe death he would obtain a large ſucceſſion) juſt ready to ſit down upon an aſp, he would not admoniſh him of his danger.

Epicurus, indeed, is ſaid to have been regular in the practice of the private virtues,

(for

(for public virtue was entirely out of his ſcheme) this he might have done in a perfect conſiſtence with his principles, by means of a happy natural temper. But his diſciples generally led very diſſolute lives, conſiſtently with the ſame principles, in conſequence of the violence of their ſelfiſh paſſions, which they could find no ſufficient motive to ſubdue.

But, reverſing this gloomy and abſurd opinion of atheiſm, let us conſider this our world as a piece of Divine workmanſhip, and that men are placed in it for mutual aid and aſſiſtance, and to promote each other's happineſs to the utmoſt extent, under the eye and protection of a common Parent.

The beautiful order of Nature is now no longer viſionary and illuſive, but muſt appear real and ſolid, and have an equal tendency to enlighten the underſtanding and pleaſe the heart. Our ſocial affections kindle at a ſacred fire, by which they are at once envigorated and refined. Our relation

to the common Author of our being creates the ſtricteſt union of affections, and renders the happineſs of others an eſſential ingredient in that of ourſelves. This agreeable effect cannot be better repreſented than in the following words of Cicero*: 'As 'this univerſe, (ſays that great Philoſopher), 'conſiſts of an union of parts, adapted to 'one another, men are united in the ſame 'manner by nature, and only diſtracted by 'vice; and they do not conſider that they 'are all of one blood, under the tuition and 'government of one and the ſame Guardian, which, if they did ſufficiently attend 'to, men would indeed live the life of the 'Gods.' The excellent advice of M. Antoninus has the ſame foundation; 'We 'ought to make it our conſtant exerciſe and 'delight, (ſays that wiſe Emperor), to perform one publicly good action after another, 'with a ſenſe of the Deity always upon our 'mind.'

But

* Lact. lib. v.

But there is another circumſtance more intereſting ſtill, which completes the obligation to virtue, and that is the will and authority of a ſupreme righteous Governour. Animated and refined affections will render virtue eaſy and agreeable in moſt caſes. But there may be circumſtances of danger, difficulty, and diſtreſs, which may prove too hard for the beſt affections. We muſt, therefore, conſider ourſelves as under a divine government; *ſub regno nati ſumus*, ſays Seneca, *Deo parere libertas eſt.* The laws of a wiſe and good governour muſt have for their object the greateſt good of the whole. Laws would be uſeleſs, if the ſubjects might violate or obſerve them as they thought fit. As the happineſs of our nature muſt proceed from the Author of our nature, it muſt be well or ill with us, as we reſpect or diſregard that awful authority which is founded in perfect goodneſs.

It is upon ſolid ground, therefore, that Plato obſerves, in his tenth book of laws, 'that it is an unalterable law of divine go-

'vernment,

'vernment, than which nothing is more 'firmly eſtabliſned, that happineſs or miſe-'ry ſhall uniformly fall to the ſhare of vir-'tue or vice, in juſt proportions, and which 'effects can by no means poſſible be pre-'vented.' Socrates perfectly agrees with Plato in this perſuaſion. In his apology, he expreſſes himſelf with more than ordinary aſſurance. 'Whether death is an ill, '(ſays he), I know not; but that, to diſobey 'God, is ill, I certainly know.'

Virtue is a quality of that importance, as that nothing can more merit the attention of the Deity. If we, therefore, overlook its neceſſary relation to a divine government, we will have a very imperfect idea of it, and diſcover it to be but a weak and ineffectual principle, when compared with the important end it ſhould accompliſh. We would find it impoſſible to refute thoſe arguments by which Carneades would prove virtue, in many caſes, to be but mere folly, if we did not ſupport its authority, by its neceſſary connection with the happineſs of mankind,

mankind, the great end of divine government, by which means it muſt become the chief object of the divine favour and regard. In this caſe virtue muſt be perfectly reconciled to ſelf-love, and our duty and intereſt will become the ſame; whereby the obligation to virtue will be rendered perfect and complete. Thus virtue becomes that *ſummum bonum*, which has ſo much employed the reſearches of philoſophy.

The truth of this moral ſyſtem is not the mere diſcovery of reaſon; it is ſtrongly confirmed by the peculiar conſtitution of the human mind. There is a ſenſe of duty and obligation planted in the heart of men, which has a manifeſt relation to the authority of a ſuperior. This principle ſtrongly intimates what we ſhould do, and what we ought to forbear. To give greater weight to its influence, it is ſupported by conſcience, which encourages the good, by a pleaſing approbation of their conduct, and puniſhes the bad, by ſevere remorſe and guilty fear.

Conſcience,

Conſcience, therefore, is juſtly repreſented as the vicegerent of heaven, planted in the breaſt for this important purpoſe, immediately to engage us to virtue, and deter us from vice.

Thus Cicero juſtly obſerves *, that we ought to pay the greateſt regard to conſcience, a principle planted in our breaſts by the immortal Gods, and of which we cannot diveſt ourſelves, which, if it bears witneſs to the uniform rectitude of our conduct, we will live with honour and integrity.

Lucretius even acknowledges, that it was from the awful aſpect that religion had upon the minds of men, that Epicurus endeavoured to dethrone the Deity, and remove him out of the world altogether; a ſtrong proof of the power of conſcious guilt; for to men innocent and upright, nothing ſurely can be more pleaſing, than the belief of a wiſe and good governour of the world, the natural object of love, and not of fear.

The

* Pro Cluentio.

The hiſtory of mankind exhibits many awful proofs of the power of this extraordinary principle; and, in many inſtances, the mind inflicts upon itſelf torments more than it can receive from any external cauſe:

Occultum, quatiente animo tortore, flagellum. JUV.

Cicero comprehends the whole of the moral ſyſtem we have been conſidering, in his elegant deſcription of natural law. 'The 'law of nature, (ſays that animated philo-'ſopher), is founded in the unalterable na-'ture of things, and diſcoverable by the 'exerciſe of our faculty of reaſon and re-'flection. It is not in the power of the 'ſenate or the people to free us from the 'obligation of this law, which is eternal 'and unalterable. It is not one law at 'Athens, and another at Rome; one law 'now, and another hereafter; but it binds 'men in all places, and all ages of the 'world, by an eternal and indiſſoluble tie. 'The author of this law is God, the Su-

'preme Ruler of the world; and his divine 'authority is ſupported by the moſt awful 'ſanctions; for the tranſgreſſion of this 'law will occaſion ſuch anguiſh and diſtreſs 'in the mind, as muſt prove the moſt ex-'quiſite puniſhment, although we ſhould 'altogether reject the common opinion of 'poſitive puniſhments.'

Thus Cicero derives moral obligation not from the feeble ſentiments and fluctuating opinions of mankind, but places it upon a foundation ſo firm and ſolid, as is not to be ſhaken, till the great pillars of nature are diſſolved.

Of all the virtues, juſtice appears to be of the greateſt importance to the peace and happineſs of ſociety. Unkindneſs, or a neglect of thoſe duties and good offices to which we have but an imperfect right, though it leſſens the comforts of ſociety, yet it may be conſiſtent with ſecurity and good order. But the violation of juſtice baniſhes peace and ſecurity from mankind, and introduces

troduces confuſion, and every ſpecies of miſery and diſtreſs into ſociety.

Juſtice, therefore, has been univerſally regarded as an object of the peculiar attention of the Deity, and to be guarded from violation by the ſevereſt ſanctions. Virgil, accordingly, repreſents injuſtice as the peculiar object of divine vengeance:

Diſcite juſtitiam moniti, et non temnere divos.

Diſtributive juſtice, indeed, is ſo neceſſary to the order and good government of the world, that it has been univerſally conſidered as inſeparable from the character of a ſupreme ruler.

It would be endleſs to multiply authorities in proof of this aſſertion; I ſhall, therefore, confine myſelf to the two following ones, in very different periods of civil ſociety.

Old Heſiod, (who wrote before the natural ſentiments of men were corrupted by any ſpecies of falſe philoſophy), makes ſome ſtriking

ſtriking obſervations to this purpoſe. He affirms, that there are many thouſands of immortal ſpirits ſent by Jove, who walk up and down the earth, inſpecting (though inviſible to mortal ſight) the different conduct of man; that Juſtice, the ſpotleſs daughter of Jove, reſpected by the celeſtial divinities themſelves, obſerves the corrupt proceedings of mankind, and complains of them to her father, that he may inflict condign puniſhment upon them. He therefore concludes, that the man who deviſes hurt to his neighbour, in effect deviſes it againſt himſelf; for that nothing can eſcape the all-ſeeing eye, and all-diſcerning mind of Jove. He adds, that, if bad men were allowed to ſucceed in their wicked deſigns, he would neither be juſt himſelf, nor adviſe his ſon to be ſo; but he was perſuaded that Jupiter, who wields the thunder, never would permit this.

The other authority is that of Menander, the moſt celebrated of all the comic poets

of

of antiquity. He lived at a time when the Athenians were arrived at the height of proſperity and politeneſs. His writings, however, are unfortunately loſt, a few fragments only excepted. In one of theſe ſhort fragments, after obſerving that the perſon who would worſhip God with acceptance, ſhould practiſe virtue, and abſtain from every vice, he adds, 'Covet not, O Pamphilius, even the thread of another man's needle; for God, who is near thee perpetually, beholds thy actions.'

But the powerful influence of religion upon conduct is not a matter of mere theory; it has appeared, in fact, to be the ſtrongeſt principle that could affect the human mind. It is a full proof of this aſſertion, that religion, though corrupted by the groſſeſt ſuperſtition, has led whole nations, in oppoſition to the tendereſt ſentiments, and moſt powerful affections of nature, to ſacrifice their innocent and beloved children upon the cruel altars of their Gods;

nations

nations alſo not ſunk in barbarity, but celebrated for their great improvement in the arts and ſciences, ſuch as were the Tyrians and Carthaginians.

The religion of the Roman people had, on ſome occaſions, a very noble effect; it bound them to the obſervance of their oaths, not only in oppoſition to their political intereſts, but the immediate force of their ſtrongeſt paſſions. The great Cyrus was ſo ſenſible of the force of this important principle, that, on his death-bed, (as Xenophon informs us), he warmly exhorts his ſons to fear the immortal Gods, who are at the ſame time omniſcient and omnipotent; and in this caſe they would not ſo much as allow one thought to enter into their mind, that was either impious or immoral.

I ſhall only further mention an inſtance or two of the powerful influence of religion upon perſons in eminent ſtations of life.

After the battle near Babylon, in which Cyrus, with his Perſian army, was totally

defeated,

defeated, though the Greeks, upon their part, were repeatedly victors, Artaxerxes ſent an inſidious embaſſy to the Greeks, offering them the moſt advantageous terms, provided they would deliver up their arms. Clearchus the Spartan, their chief commander, was then about to be employed in a religious ſervice. This, however, he would not neglect, notwithſtanding the very critical ſituation of the Greeks, but left it to the other officers to return an anſwer to the King. This was a ſtrong inſtance of the power of the religious principle, ſo much indeed the more ſo, that the principle was here miſtaken; for a juſt ſenſe of religion would, in this caſe, have directed him to diſcharge his duty to thoſe brave men who had entruſted him with the chief command. We find alſo ſomething of a ſimilar nature in the conduct of the virtuous Phocion, which had almoſt coſt him the loſs of a battle.

Another remarkable inſtance of the influence of religion, appears in the conduct

and

and behaviour of Diomedon. He was an Athenian of an illuſtrious character, celebrated (as Diodorus Siculus informs us) for the practice of juſtice, and every other virtue. The Athenian fleet, under the conduct of ten admirals, (of whom Diomedon was one), gained a ſignal victory over the fleet of Sparta. He, however, with five of his colleagues, who had returned to Athens, was falſely accuſed of a fictitious crime by one Callixenes, and unjuſtly condemned to death; of which raſh proceeding the Athenians, as uſual, quickly repented, and ſuffered Callixenes to die of famine in priſon, hated of all men. Diomedon, when he had received the ſentence of death, made the following addreſs to his countrymen: 'Athenians, I wiſh the ſentence you have 'paſſed upon us may not prove the misfor-'tune of the republic; but I have one fa-'vour to aſk of you in behalf of my col-'leagues and myſelf, which is, to acquit us 'before the Gods of the vows we made to them 'for you and ourſelves, as we are not in a 'condition

'condition to diſcharge them; for it is to 'their protection, invoked before the battle, 'we acknowledge we are indebted for the 'victory gained by us over the enemy.'

In this ſhort ſpeech, Diomedon diſcovers the great force of religion, inſpiring him with an elevation of mind above every private concern, and even the fear of death itſelf, which was immediately before his eyes. His anxious ſollicitude was the diſcharge of that obligation of duty and gratitude which he believed he was under to the Gods; and, upon this occaſion, it is ſaid every good citizen preſent melted into tears.

Too great a love of ſimplicity may have induced ſome moral writers to eſtabliſh virtue upon one, or a few more immediate inſtinctive principles. But, it is to be conſidered, that virtue muſt have power to check the violence of all the ſelfiſh paſſions, to conquer the greateſt difficulties that often croſs its way, and to regulate the whole plan of life in a conſtant and uniform tenor; it will therefore be neceſſary to find a more

firm and ſolid foundation to ſupport it. Virtue is the great poll-ſtar, by which we muſt direct our whole courſe of action, ſuperior to the ſmiles or frowns of fortune, we muſt part with life before we let go our integrity.

A principle of ſuch power and energy can never be the ſole effect of feeble and inconſtant affections; it muſt require the exertion of all the faculties of the ſoul, and the influence of every motive that can affect the heart.

The immediate pleaſure of virtue muſt be ſupported by a true ſenſe of honour, the approbation of conſcience, and reverence for the Deity; and we muſt be perſuaded, from the nature of moral government, that virtue alone is the ſure path that can lead us to the final happineſs and perfection of our nature, the ultimate end of all our deſire. In this manner, public and private happineſs, the general good, and the good of the individual, are perfectly united, whereby

whereby the firmeſt principle of virtue is eſtabliſhed in the heart.

Some objection has been made to the plan of morals we have explained, as if it was too artificial, and not founded in the natural and immediate diſpoſitions of the human mind. But ſuch objection ſeems to be without any juſt foundation; for reaſon is ſurely natural to man; it is even the diſtinguiſhing faculty of his nature, and therefore muſt be eſſential to every action that can properly be called human.

The inferior animals are governed merely by affections, appetites, and inſtincts; but theſe are ſo wiſely adjuſted, as ſeldom to carry them beyond the true end of their nature. It is otherwiſe with theſe principles in the human heart; they often tranſport men into violent exceſſes, and hurry them into the moſt criminal actions. It is reaſon alone which can prevent theſe bad effects, and make all the paſſions ſubſervient to virtue. It is reaſon which examines the deſtination of man, and the order of nature; which

which aſſembles and unites every object that may have any power over the human heart, whereby the firmeſt purpoſe and reſolution is eſtabliſhed in the mind; and if nature, from its imperfection, ſhould ſtill be inſufficient for the arduous exertions of virtue, philoſophers have juſtly thought, that there was ground to hope for a divine influence, θεια επιπνοια, *afflatus numinis*, to ſupport the weakneſs of nature, when meeting with difficulties it was unable to overcome.

Upon theſe principles, the virtue of thoſe eminent perſons of antiquity which we ſo much admire, was firmly eſtabliſhed; of whom none perhaps was more illuſtrious than Socrates. His virtue was ſo firm, that, if we believe Ælian, he ever maintained a placid equanimity of temper, and an unſhaken firmneſs of mind, amidſt all the fatal diſaſters which befel his country in his time. And he was not only ſuperior to the fear of death in the field of battle, but, when he met its calm approach by the hand of the executioner, he conſidered his ſubmiſſion to

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it as a dutiful reſignation to the will of God.

The principles of Epicurus had not virtue for their object. Intent upon immediate eaſe, or ſenſual pleaſure, they reduced his diſciples into a ſervile ſubjection to the falſe maxims, and corrupt practices of the world; and there was nothing in his plan, from which the mind could derive any degree of energy or power. Even benevolence is repreſented by Mr Hume himſelf as a feeble practical principle, fitted rather to entertain the imagination, than influence the heart.

Not ſuch was the virtue of Socrates; founded upon a rock, it ſtood firm againſt the tempeſt and the ſtorm. Horace, therefore, where he ſeems to draw the great lines of his character, had reaſon to ſay that he would have remained undaunted amidſt the ruins and total diſſolution of the world.

CON-

CONCLUSION.

THE proper influence of ſocial virtue is to engage us to cultivate that temper, and purſue that conduct which may tend moſt effectually to promote the general happineſs of mankind, and to which our own particular pleaſures and purſuits ought to be ſubordinate.

Thus, we muſt pay an inviolable regard to truth and juſtice, however contrary, in particular caſes, to our own private intereſt.

We, however, naturally prefer what moſt immediately concerns ourſelves, and ſelf-love will not allow us to ſacrifice our own proper happineſs, even to the general intereſt of mankind.

In order, therefore, to the regular practice of virtue, we muſt diſcover it to be, upon the whole, the trueſt ſource of our happineſs. In this caſe, virtue muſt become a general principle, to which all our particular

lar affections muſt be ſubjected, and by which they muſt be regulated.

The prevalence of any ſelfiſh affection would not only prevent the general good effects of virtue, but, by corrupting the particular ſources of that amiable principle, would render them ſubſervient to the purpoſes of vice.

Thus Caeſar applied his humanity to ſecure that popularity, by means of which, his ambitious ſchemes might obtain more certain ſucceſs.

But it is further to be obſerved of human virtue, that it ariſes from the united influence of the two great faculties of the mind, the underſtanding and the will.

The rectitude of the will and affections is the immediate ſource of this important quality; but the rectitude of the affections depends upon the repreſentation of ſuitable objects of good to the mind, and this repreſentation is within the province of the underſtanding. This faculty, chief in dignity, ſearches through nature for thoſe objects of

good

good which may inſpire the heart with the love of virtue, and lay a firm foundation for its ſuperior authority and regular exertion. But, if ſuch objects are no where to be found, our inquiries concerning virtue muſt be all fruitleſs and vain.

Epicurus and his followers diſmiſſed Providence from the univerſe altogether; they, however, paid an outward regard to virtue. They could not do otherwiſe; for, if they had avowedly deſtroyed the moral diſtinctions, they would not have been tollerated in any civilized ſtate.

But, whilſt they retained the name of virtue, they loſt the thing itſelf. Inſtead of a principle qualified to govern the whole plan of life, and to ſubdue the violence of private paſſions and deſires, they ſubſtituted a ſervile miniſter of eaſe or pleaſure. Nay, they ſometimes exhibit a deformed and miſſhapen monſter, and give it the name of virtue.

It is, indeed, impoſſible, amidſt the wild confuſion and fortuitous jumble of ſenſeleſs atoms,

atoms, to find any ſolid principle of beauty and order. We can find no object to give regularity and ſtrength to ſocial affection, where a ſtate of ſociety never could be intended.

In a fatherleſs and forlorn world there can be no view of permanent good to give energy and vigour to the mind, no ultimate end which we may ſteadily purſue. In this caſe, our conduct muſt be as irregular and uncertain as is the caprice of chance. If we would, then, find out real and ſolid virtue, we muſt ſeek it in a fairer frame of nature, a regular ſyſtem, the effect of wiſdom and deſign, and under the righteous and kind adminiſtration of one ſupreme Ruler.

In this view of the univerſe, nature aſſumes a lovely form, and inſpires us with every motive of virtue, every principle of good affection. We now appear to be the offspring of God, (an obſervation in ſupport of virtue, made by the antient philoſophers), and it is not poſſible to conceive a firmer

bond of union, a ſtronger principle of mutual benevolence.

And when we conſider the Deity as our common Parent, and the righteous Ruler of the world, we muſt be ſatisfied, that the plan of his divine government muſt be ſo conſtituted as to encourage virtue and deter from vice, that is, it muſt have for its great object and end the general happineſs of ſociety.

The certain conſequence of this is, that, under the divine government, it is impoſſible for men to find any real intereſt in vice, and the hope of happineſs can belong to virtue alone.

This very ſhort and general view of the regular ſyſtem of nature which we have given, furniſhes us at once with the ſtrongeſt motives of virtue, the moſt powerful ſprings of immediate good affection, and animates us alſo with the pleaſing hopes of ſolid happineſs in future.

Thus virtue is recommended to us by pleaſures of the pureſt kind, which ſhe immediately

mediately beſtows, and is rendered ſtill of much greater importance by the well grounded hopes of future bleſs with which ſhe inſpires us. And theſe high hopes will much more than counter-balance any diſtreſs or calamity which virtue, in the mean time, may occaſionally expoſe us to.

By this ſyſtem of nature, divine and human virtue, our duty to God and man, are eſſentially united, we can give up neither without the diſſolution of both.

Human virtue receives its ſolid ſupport from that which is divine; and in vain do we affect piety towards God, if we neglect the proper duty we owe to man.

Thus real virtue is ultimately derived from a divine ſource. Hence it receives that peculiar excellence which has been the conſtant ſubject of the higheſt panegyric.

Inſpired by the divine origin and form of virtue, the antients have exerted all the powers of imagination and eloquence in its praiſe.

In

In the opinion of Plato, virtue, viewed in a full point of light, would excite our love and admiration in the higheſt degree poſſible.

Perſius conſiders it as the ſevereſt puniſhment which God could inflict upon the greateſt criminals, to admit them to a full view of virtue, and then be excluded for ever from its preſence *.

Seneca repreſents virtue as the great object which, in the ſurvey of all his works, affords the greateſt complacence and delight to the Deity.

And Lucan deſcribes it as the temple in which God chiefly delights to dwell, raiſing it above heaven itſelf †.

To the authority of the antients, I ſhall add the opinion of one modern philoſopher: One, however, who is beyond the leaſt ſuſpicion

* Summe pater divum, ſævos punire tyrannos,
Haud alia ratione velis,
Virtutem videant, intabeſcantque relicta.

† Eſtne Dei ſedes, niſi terra, et pontus, et aër,
Et cœlum, et virtus.

ſpicion of religious prejudices, and equally remarkable for a determined ſcepticiſm, and ſingular acuteneſs of parts, I mean Mr Hume. There is none that ſets the excellence of virtue in a ſtronger point of light than he. He conſiders it as an eſſential character of Deity to be the conſtant guardian of virtue; inſomuch that if, in any one inſtance, a good man ſhall be involved in a ſeries of misfortunes, this he conſiders as undoubted evidence there can be no God. It is in the character of an hiſtorian we may chiefly expect to diſcover this author's real ſentiments. Accordingly, when he mentions the death of John King of France, an excellent, but unfortunate Prince, he makes the following reflection, with an uncommon degree of aſſurance: 'Nothing,' ſays he, 'can be a ſtronger proof of the great do-'minion of fortune over men, than the ca-'lamities which purſued a Monarch of ſuch 'eminent valour, goodneſs, and honour.'

We have, therefore, the beſt reaſon to conclude, that virtue, ſo excellent in itſelf,

ſo

ſo pleaſing to the Deity, cannot fail to be united to happineſs at laſt; and, though theſe objects ſometimes ſeem to take different paths in the preſent ſtate, for very wiſe purpoſes, yet they will meet at laſt, never to be ſeparated more.

APPEN-

APPENDIX I.

Of the Diſintereſtedneſs of Virtue.

SINCE virtue and happineſs muſt be inſeparably united, the certain conſequence of this is, that it muſt be our trueſt wiſdom, and beſt intereſt, ſteadily to adhere to the practice of virtue.

Whence then is it, that diſintereſtedneſs is repreſented as a peculiar property of virtue, and that it is conſidered as a juſt encomium which we beſtow upon this amiable quality, when we praiſe it as a generous and diſintereſted principle? This repreſentation of virtue ſeems to ariſe from a want of preciſion, which introduces great confuſion into our ideas, and therefore it will merit a more particular examination.

Our

Our affections are the natural ſources of our happineſs, and the proper principles of action. An object which does not pleaſe us, to which we have no affection, can never engage our purſuit. All our voluntary actions, therefore, are intereſted in their principle; they proceed from the pleaſing exerciſe of affection towards what is good, or what appears to be ſo.

Some objects of affection immediately pleaſe, or are good in themſelves; others pleaſe only as the means of procuring good, or are good in their conſequences. Theſe laſt, however, may, from the importance of their end, often produce the ſtrongeſt affection. When both concur, the principle of action muſt be greatly ſtrengthened. If both are wanting, was the object ever ſo morally good, it would not engage our purſuit; at leaſt, this would be in ſo cold and indifferent a manner, as could neither procure confidence nor eſteem.

There is one important diſtinction of the objects of our affection; ſome of theſe are inanimate,

inanimate, and incapable of pleaſure or pain. Others are animate and rational, and may be greatly intereſted in our conduct.

Thus muſic, painting, poetry, and the other objects of what are called the fine arts, are immediate ſources of very ſenſible pleaſure. But the happineſs which flows from ſuch ſources is purely perſonal, and cannot, in the leaſt degree, be communicated to the objects themſelves, which are altogether incapable of it.

It is quite otherwiſe with our ſocial affections; theſe, as they are immediately pleaſing to ourſelves, ſo they naturally tend to communicate happineſs to all within the ſphere of their influence.

Thus, when we look upon a fine picture, we find an agreeable entertainment to our own taſte, but others are nothing the better for it; but, when we relieve a brother in diſtreſs, we not only gratify the pleaſing affection of benevolence, but communicate happineſs to one of our own ſpecies.

The exercise of good affection is, at least, in its salutary effects to society, as much preferable to the gratification of a fine taste, as a copious fountain which pours forth its streams to enrich and beautify the neighbouring plains, is to a scanty spring, which, though immediately pleasing, is yet entirely confined within itself, and can send no supplies abroad.

It is, however, to be observed, with regard to social affection, that the principle which animates it, is not the good which it communicates to others, but the pleasure which immediately attends the affection itself. A good man may, perhaps, sometimes have it in his power to make thousands as happy as himself; but the happiness of these is quite different from his own. The beautiful prospect which the effects of his virtue may open up to him, will indeed increase his pleasure; but this pleasure is still personal; it is his own, and not that of others.

Simple,

Simple, and original good affection, is immediately pleaſing; but why we ſhould not equally approve of affection, as it is ſtrengthened and improved by views of private happineſs, provided ſuch views are quite conformable to virtue, it will not be eaſy to account for.

Simple affection is but an inſtinctive principle; as it is improved, it is rational, that is, ſuch improvement is the effect of reaſon. The one is often greatly too weak for its purpoſe; but the other may acquire ſtrength ſufficient to counterbalance all the ſelfiſh affections.

Improved affection is, indeed, the effect of views of ſelf-intereſt, or perſonal happineſs; but ſimple affection has happineſs interwoven in its original conſtitution. Thus both are intereſted; and their exertion and influence is entirely proportioned to the degree of their ſeveral reſpective intereſts.

It is therefore evidently laying too weak a foundation for virtue to derive it ſolely from original good affection. The immediate

diate influence of good affection cannot be a ſufficient ſupport for virtue, unleſs we ſuppoſe that influence to be more powerful than the influence of every other object of our affection. But ſuch a ſuppoſition is inconſiſtent with the preſent condition of human nature.

We may form a high idea of a moral conſtitution of the heart; we may contemplate the rectitude of ſuperior ſpirits with peculiar delight; but we muſt not aſcend to the ſublime regions of philoſophy, far leſs to heaven itſelf, in order to diſcover the true model of human virtue.

Human virtue muſt move in a lower ſphere; its original influence is but weak; it has many ſtrong and irregular paſſions to combat with; it therefore requires all the ſupport which true ſelf-love can bring to its aid. And, if we compare a perſon who reſts his virtue ſolely upon good affection, with one who, to equal good affection, ſuperadds all the happy effects which he believes will flow from virtue, we muſt be

perſuaded

perſuaded that the virtue of the one will be more regular, more conſtant, and much more to be depended upon, than that of the other.

In the one caſe, the will and affections ſeem alone to be concerned; in the other, the underſtanding alſo has its full exerciſe.

That virtue muſt appear, therefore, to be moſt complete, which is the effect of the united influence of the great faculties of the mind. Of which faculties the underſtanding is chief in dignity, and can alone diſcover and recommend that propriety of conduct which is eſſential to virtue.

It is the underſtanding which aſſembles thoſe objects, which, though remote, yet, when brought near, have the ſtrongeſt influence upon the heart, and are the ſources of all thoſe illuſtrious efforts and atchievements of virtue which we ſo much magnify and admire.

The ſtrength and firmneſs of virtue is, therefore, evidently founded in a complex principle, an union of preſent and future

good:

good: And it is only an overbalance of happineſs, upon a proper eſtimate of all circumſtances, that can give virtue a ſuperiority over all our other deſires and affections which may be inconſiſtent with it. We are, therefore, neceſſarily led to this evident concluſion, that virtue is of all principles the moſt intereſted, and that its chief power and excellence is founded in this quality of it, that it is partly our chief good, and partly the neceſſary means of obtaining that great ultimate end.

Some philoſophers would diſparage virtue, conſidered as the means of happineſs; but this has been ſhown to be a neceſſary quality of human virtue, and is confirmed by its perfect agreement with the natural courſe of human conduct.

In every department of life, it is not ſo much immediate pleaſure as the proſpect of final ſucceſs which engages the ſkill and induſtry, and ſupports the patience and perſeverance of mankind. The ſoldier would never ſubmit to the toils and dangers of his

profeſſion, was it not for the proſpect of victory and ſucceſs at laſt.

Neither would the mariner ſo often tempt the dangerous ocean, was it not for the like hope of ſucceſs. The ſame principle determines many individuals to leave their friends and native country, and to purſue their fortune in diſtant realms, through many toils and dangers, and yet the object of their purſuit may be both diſtant and uncertain.

Since virtue and happineſs muſt then be eſſentially united, the queſtion returns with great weight, whence that applauſe we beſtow upon virtue, as a generous and diſintereſted principle? The only anſwer that can be given to this queſtion is, by diſtinguiſhing betwixt the ſource and object of virtue. The original ſource of virtue is a pleaſing affection of the heart, and this affection is capable of the greateſt improvement, from reflection upon its happy conſequences. But though virtue muſt flow from a happy ſource, and prove our trueſt

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and beſt intereſt, yet its object is not our own, but the intereſt of others. And though there is betwixt virtue and its object the neceſſary connection of cauſe and effect; yet, in thought, we can ſeparate theſe, and contemplate the effect without attending to the cauſe. Thus we ſhall only diſcover the happy fruits of virtue, and the bleſſings it beſtows upon mankind. And, in this light, virtue appears to be a generous and diſintereſted principle.

This partial view of things may ſerve the purpoſe of the orator, and give him an opportunity of diſplaying all the powers of his eloquence in praiſe of virtue. But it is repugnant to the character of a philoſopher, who ought to take a complete view of the ſubject, which, if he does, he will find virtue to be the moſt intereſted of all principles.

Upon this occaſion, I cannot avoid taking notice of the raſh cenſure of Lord Shaftſbury, and his admirers, when they find fault with Chriſtianity for propoſing, as a

proper

proper encouragement to virtue, the final poſſeſſion of true and ſincere happineſs. Whereas, did Chriſtianity, according to their ideas, but in contradiction to a moſt eſſential principle in human nature, ſeparate virtue and happineſs, it would be a greater objection to that ſyſtem of religion than any yet advanced by infidels.

We muſt, indeed, annex no reward to virtue but what is perfectly agreeable to its nature; and though a Mahometan paradiſe tends to corrupt the ſoul, by ever preſenting to it looſe gratifications and ſenſual indulgences; yet the Chriſtian heaven, by accuſtoming the mind to the contemplation of the nobleſt objects, tends to purify the heart, and to promote that virtue which it means to reward.

Virtue (as is commonly obſerved) is deſirable on its own account; it has a native power to pleaſe, and is thereby rendered an agreeable object to a correſpondent affection. But this is not peculiar to virtue; all our other affections likewiſe have their

objects agreeable to them. The ambitious man delights in power, the ſenſualiſt loves pleaſure, and wealth is the object of the ſordid deſires of the miſer. If we are at no pains to regulate our paſſions and affections, they will prevail in their influence according to their original ſtrength; and virtue will be in danger of being altogether ſuppreſſed.

The immediate power of good affection cannot then be a ſufficient principle of virtue.

But virtue, beſides being deſirable on its own account, is alſo deſirable on account of the happy conſequences which attend it. Theſe are ſo many and ſo conſiderable, as that, if we would make a juſt eſtimate of them, they would, in moſt caſes, make the ſcale of virtue preponderate againſt all our other paſſions and deſires, even in our preſent ſtate of exiſtence. It muſt, however, be confeſſed, that this effect would fail in caſes where virtue would expoſe us to great danger or diſtreſs; or where the natural

paſſions

paſſions were violent and ſtrong. Indeed, if we would argue upon the principles of Epicurus, virtue would be nothing elſe than a calculation of all the advantages or diſadvantages which would attend a particular courſe of life. In this calculation, a perſon of a calm temper, or a contemplative turn of mind, would make the wiſeſt choice; but, if his temper ſhould alter, he muſt make his calculation of new. Perſons, however, of violent paſſions, would make a very different calculation, and the gratification of theſe paſſions would form a great part of the accompt.

The true ſpirit of virtue riſes above ſuch mean calculations; and the mind, envigorated by a firm perſuaſion of a righteous moral government, ſteadily purſues the true path of virtue, intruſting the happy iſſue of ſuch a conduct to the wiſe Ruler of the world alone.

But, upon an opinion of atheiſm, there cannot poſſibly be one common ultimate end to man; a thouſand different objects would diſtract

diſtract their affections, or ever jarring intereſts excite cruel animoſities, which would not fail to produce multiplied ſcenes of miſery and diſtreſs; and the moſt benevolent of human kind would have nothing to do but to weep over that miſery which they could not prevent.

APPEN-

APPENDIX II.

Reflections upon MR HUME's *System of Morality.*

MR HUME has extended the influence of ſentiment in morals far beyond Dr Hutcheſon, or perhaps any other writer upon the ſubject. As this author writes with great eloquence, acuteneſs, and art, his particular theory, ſo different from the preceding one, will merit ſome examination.

He obſerves, with regard to the ſciences, in general, that our reaſoning is more perfect where we can proceed upon a general abſtract principle, well eſtabliſhed, and afterwards branch it out into a variety of inferences and concluſions. But where we cannot

cannot find ſuch a principle, which we may depend upon, our only other method is to collect particular facts, whereby we may aſcend to ſome general principle. This laſt obſervation will anſwer very well to natural philoſophy, the knowledge of which we can only acquire from facts and experiments. For example, we could never diſcover, *a priori*, that gravity was an univerſal property of matter; we only arrive at this concluſion from obſerving this property always to take place in every experiment we can make upon matter.

The ſcience of morals, however, is very different from that of natural philoſophy; it admits of the more perfect manner of reaſoning; but the leſs perfect does not at all correſpond to it. The facts upon which this laſt is founded depend upon the ſentiments of individuals, which are often different, according to the different fabric and conſtitution of the heart; and, therefore, we cannot here find a ſolid foundation for a certain and indubitable concluſion. We

can,

can, however, lay hold on a general and abſtract principle, whoſe evidence is unqueſtionable, and from which we may deduce particular inferences and concluſions with the greateſt certainty.

This principle is the natural and direct tendency of virtue, as a deſigning and active principle, to purſue and promote the happineſs of mankind.

The moral goodneſs of this principle our reaſon perceives to be as neceſſary and immutable as is the deſire of happineſs, a principle which never can be eradicated from the human heart.

Mr Hume, in entering upon his ſubject, is unfortunately led to ſet out upon a falſe principle, which vitiates the whole train of his reaſoning, and lands him in falſe and abſurd concluſions. He deſcribes virtue to be every quality or action of the mind, which is attended with the general approbation of mankind. This deſcription is obſcure: He does not explain what he means by an action of the mind. The beſt conſtruction

ſtruction that can be put upon the whole is, that he means an active quality; but he afterwards entirely departs from this meaning, and conſiders the qualities of the mind, without any relation to action whatever.

He ſupports his general propoſition by the authority of ſentiment, which he makes the ſole original judge of morals. I have conſidered this matter formerly, and ſhown, that reaſon is the ſupreme and ultimate judge in morals, to whoſe deciſions, therefore, the ſuggeſtions of the moral ſenſe muſt ſubmit. And, as even the general approbation of mankind may be corrupted, ſo, wherever ſuch approbation contradicts the clear concluſions of reaſon, this is a proof that it muſt be corrupted.

I ſhall, on this occaſion, therefore, only conſider the crime of ingratitude, as Mr Hume employs a great deal of ſubtile reaſoning to prove that crime to be an object of ſenſe, and quite without the province of reaſon. But very little argument will ſuffice to ſet this matter in a true light. Mr

Hume

Hume confines his idea of ingratitude to that feeling of indignation and abhorrence which it naturally raiſes in our breaſt. It will readily be allowed, that ſuch feeling is the effect of a particular ſenſe only, and there was no occaſion to prove that it could not be a concluſion of reaſon.

The only province of reaſon, (and which Mr Hume totally overlooks), is the relation which ingratitude bears to the happineſs of mankind; and very few words will ſhow how inconſiſtent ingratitude is with that ultimate end of ſociety.

Let us ſuppoſe ingratitude, in the higheſt degree of it, that of returning evil for good, to be univerſally approved of and practiſed, and that every man who does good offices to another, is to lay his account with a proportional return of bad offices. In this caſe, what man would indulge benevolence, if it was naturally to expoſe him to ill will and ill treatment? Neither ſelf-love, nor any other principle in our nature, would permit this. If, then, ingratitude

ſtops the exerciſe of the ſweeteſt affection in the human heart; if it prevents the interchange of good offices among men, nothing ſurely can ſtand in a ſtronger oppoſition to the peace and happineſs of mankind. When one collective body of men carries on a continual war againſt another, this muſt appear to be a miſerable condition; but, if one of the parties ſhould make reaſonable conceſſions, and even perform good offices to the other party, and the effect of this ſhould only be to inflame their hoſtile diſpoſitions, and irritate them to commit greater outrages ſtill, imagination cannot conceive a greater evil than this, and an evil deſperate, and without remedy.

This is the clear deciſion of reaſon, that ſuperior faculty which alone can diſcover the impropriety and corruption of the moral ſenſe, and muſt ever condemn that ſenſe, if it ſhould lead to what is contrary to the true intereſts of men in general.

Mr Hume not only makes ſentiment the ſole original judge of morals, but extends its

its province, by including under morals every mental quality that may appear useful or agreeable.

He contends, that the general sentiment of approbation, thus enlarged, is similar to the sentiment by which we approve of justice and benevolence; from which he would infer, that all the objects of such approbation are equally entitled to be ranked amongst the moral virtues.

Accordingly, we find, in his catalogue of the virtues, courage, wit, quickness of parts, secrecy, caution, and many other such mental qualities. Indeed, carried along by the force of his argument, he forgets his restriction of virtue to mental qualities, and enrols amongst the virtues corporeal qualities, such as cleanliness, good address, and facility of speech. He even descends to things external, such as the goods of birth or fortune. Nay, if we make the sentiment of beauty or utility the proper standard of morals, this will lead us to examine the moral virtues of a brute animal, a flower,

or

or a plant, or even of a thing inanimate, that has any manner of utility.

It were to be wiſhed that Mr Hume, (after having aſſembled ſuch a numerous body of virtues from different quarters), had marſhalled them in proper order, and given them a leader, under whoſe conduct their united force might have been directed towards one great end.

But this is the leſs to be regreted, as Mr Hume's general argument is extremely fallacious. Attending to the ſingle circumſtance of utility, this circumſtance (he obſerves) excites a ſentiment of approbation; and this ſentiment being equally applicable to all mental qualities, as well as thoſe commonly reputed moral, this ſimilarity of ſentiment annihilates ſuch diſtinction, and makes mental and moral qualities the ſame.

But the fallacy of this reaſoning will appear upon a very ſlight examination.

For all things in nature may agree in a general attribute, without however taking away their ſpecific differences; and perhaps the

the circumſtance of utility is applicable, in ſome degree, to every thing that exiſts. We cannot, however, from this conclude, that a ſhip and a houſe are the ſame; or, becauſe a philoſopher and an aſs are both animals, Mr Hume would not have allowed the conſequence that therefore a philoſopher is an aſs.

Mental qualities, indeed, abſtractedly conſidered, may be the ſubject of pompous declamation and high panegyric; but the external beauties of nature will alſo admit of all the embelliſhments of poetry or eloquence.

I ſhall, therefore, make but a few obſervations, to demonſtrate the eſſential difference betwixt moral, and other mental qualities.

What chiefly diſtinguiſhes virtue from other mental qualities is this, that virtue is an active principle, productive of good, from will, intention, and deſign. It is a living ſource of good, founded in the two great faculties of the human mind, the will and the underſtanding. Virtue, therefore,

is

is applicable to man alone, of all the living beings upon earth. It is the proper cauſe, and not the paſſive inſtrument of good, and is eſtimated not ſo much from the utility of an action, as the goodneſs of the principle from which an action proceeds.

It is from the rectitude or depravity of the will and affections, that a good or a bad purpoſe is formed; and the mental qualities mentioned by Mr Hume may be equally inſtrumental in accompliſhing the one purpoſe or the other, and have no peculiar relation to virtue.

This will be illuſtrated by contraſting a virtuous and a vicious character. Aurengezeibe is repreſented as a perſon poſſeſſed of the greateſt natural abilities, boldneſs, and intrepidity, great knowledge, penetration, quickneſs, and ſagacity, art and addreſs, vigilance and induſtry; all which mental qualities he continually applied to the perpetration of crimes the moſt ſhocking to humanity, and which muſt fill the mind with the utmoſt horror and deteſtation.

On

On the other hand, Alfred the Great, poſſeſſed of equal natural abilities, applied all theſe to promote the happineſs of his people. His courage and conduct he employed in ſubduing the enemies of his country. He applied his political wiſdom to promote knowledge, piety, and virtue amongſt his people; to enact ſalutary laws, and give due attention to their ſtrict execution; and to lay the foundation of that conſtitution which at preſent we ſo much value. He even deprived himſelf of neceſſary ſleep, that he might more effectually conſult the repoſe of his ſubjects. No wonder, then, if his hiſtorian exclaims, O Alfred! the wonder and aſtoniſhment of all ages.

The neceſſary effects of theſe oppoſite characters upon the minds of men are obvious. The firſt excites hatred and averſion, horror and deteſtation. The other engages our love and eſteem, our confidence and truſt. Aurengezeibe is a monſter, from whom we would fly more than from the peſtilence. Alfred is as a guardian angel

ſent

ſent down from heaven to protect and bleſs mankind, and in whoſe ſervice a good man would willingly expoſe himſelf to death.

As the mental qualities in theſe characters are ſuppoſed the ſame, the ſtrong oppoſition they have to one another can only ariſe from the moral qualities. It is therefore not the poſſeſſion of mental qualities, but their uſe or abuſe, that diſtinguiſhes virtue and vice.

And the proper application of theſe mental qualities depends entirely upon the rectitude of the will. And the higher degree in which any perſon is poſſeſſed of ſuch qualities, he renders himſelf ſo much the more criminal by their abuſe. Mr Hume, however, thinks fit to obſerve, 'That the diſtinction of voluntary or involuntary, was little regarded by the antients; but that modern philoſophers, treating all morals on a like footing with civil laws, were neceſſitated to render the circumſtance of voluntary and involuntary the foundation of their whole theory.'

In

In relation to virtue, Mr Hume had formerly taken away the underſtanding, by ſubſtituting ſenſe in place of reaſon; and now, when he takes away the will alſo, what then can remain of man? Without will, we cannot act at all; and, without action, virtue is an empty name. Real and ſolid virtue depends chiefly upon the rectitude of the will and affections. An action may be externally good; but, if it proceeds from a corrupt heart, the agent is equally vicious as if the action had been bad.

If a judge, merely from bribery, pronounces a juſt ſentence, he is equally a corrupt judge, as if, from the ſame motive, he had pronounced a contrary ſentence; for the principle from which he acts is inconſiſtent with juſtice.

Mr Hume, however, would ſupport his opinion, ſo ſingular, and ſo contrary to the common ſenſe of mankind, by the authority of the antients. But this is throwing a reproach upon antiquity, altogether unmerited.

Seneca lays it down as a certain maxim, 'That an action cannot be morally good, 'unleſs there is a rectitude in the will; for, 'from this faculty, the action proceeds *.'

When the Roman lawyers define juſtice to be a conſtant inclination and will, that part of the definition they derive not from the ſubtleties of civil law, but from the original ſource of nature and truth. From this ſource proceed the diſtinctions of merit and demerit, rewardable and puniſhable; and to apply the ſanctions of law to any other actions than ſuch as are voluntary, would be abſurd and inconſiſtent with the true ends of government, whether human or divine.

No one was better acquainted with the antient philoſophers than Cicero, and none has explained their ſeveral ſyſtems with more accuracy, elegance, and candour than he; and he delivers his ſentiments in the following manner †. He applies the word *virtue*

* Epiſt. xcv. Actio recta non erit, niſi recta fuerit voluntas, ab hac enim eſt actio.

†. L. v. De finibus.

virtue (in the ſame manner as the moderns) to any uſeful quality, of whatever kind. But, when he reſtricts it to the nature of man, he makes the two following diſtinctions, the virtues of the body and the virtues of the mind, which laſt, he ſays, greatly excelled the other.

And the virtues of the mind he diſtinguiſhes into voluntary and involuntary. The inſtances of the laſt he condeſcends upon, are docility and memory, and ſuch other qualities from which a man is denominated ingenious.

But the voluntary virtues are, ſays he, great and real virtues, diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar excellency, and which, in ſtrict propriety of ſpeech, alone deſerve the name of virtues. To theſe voluntary virtues, he refers the four cardinal virtues, juſtice, temperance, fortitude, and prudence. This relation as to juſtice and temperance is obvious. There is, perhaps, not the ſame preciſion with regard to fortitude and prudence; but beſides that the improvement of theſe

qualities

qualities is voluntary, they are ſo neceſſary to ſupport the more difficult exertions of virtue, and to direct the regularity of its operations, that they have a good title to be ranked amongſt the cardinal virtues, but this only when they are voluntarily applied to theſe important purpoſes; but if otherwiſe employed, they degenerated into cruelty and oppreſſion, fraud and deceit. Fortitude, as a natural endowment, confers no merit upon its poſſeſſor, becauſe it is no acquiſition of his. And Homer, than whom none better underſtood mankind, expreſſes the natural ſentiments of men as to this quality, in the angry addreſs Agamemnon makes to Achilles, according to Mr Pope.

If thou art ſtrong, 'twas Heaven that ſtrength beſtow'd,
For know, vain man, thy valour is from God.

Mr Hume, therefore, by thus neglecting a diſtinction which concerns the very eſſence of virtue, thereby ſubverts its foundation altogether. Indeed, the general ſentiments of utility

utility or beauty which Mr Hume makes the ſources of virtue, are of ſuch a nature and extent, as to admit vicious as well as virtuous qualities, and even totally to exclude theſe laſt qualities whenever they expoſe us to danger, difficulty, and ſuffering, circumſtances which render virtue more illuſtrious, and excite our admiration no leſs than our love.

We have formerly ſhown that virtue cannot be built upon Epicurean principles; it is no ſmall proof of this, that ſuch an effect has baffled the ſtrongeſt exertion of thoſe uncommon abilities of which this author is poſſeſſed, and that by his own confeſſion, for he thus expreſſes himſelf, 'Theſe moral 'differences have a conſiderable influence, 'and being ſufficient, at leaſt, for diſcourſe, 'ſerve all our purpoſes in company, in the 'pulpit, on the theatre, and in the ſchools.'

Thus, virtue is chiefly conſidered as an object fitted to pleaſe the imagination, or dwell upon the tongue, but not to take hold of the heart and govern the whole conduct.

If

If ſuch is virtue, it had better be thrown away, rather than reproach us for what it cannot amend, or diſcover ſuch errors as it cannot remedy.

The vices, and even crimes which Mr Hume would palliate upon his principles, I would chooſe, for the author's ſake, to bury in oblivion, and to allow the full influence of candour or charity, to induce a belief, that it was not Mr Hume's real purpoſe to ſubvert the foundations of morality altogether, but that he was betrayed into his capital errors, by repoſing too great a truſt in the authority of ſentiment, which the practices and cuſtoms of mankind will, no doubt, greatly influence. Whatever may be in this, a regard to truth, virtue, and the happineſs of mankind, make it neceſſary to lay open and expoſe his dangerous errors, eſpecially as the elegance of his ſtyle, and his peculiar and ſubtile manner of reaſoning, may give them too much credit with the inattentive and unwary.

DISSER-

DISSERTATION IV.

Of the Immateriality and Immortality of the Soul.

PART I.

MAN is distinguished from the inferior animals by the faculty of reason and reflection. The other animals are limited in their operations, by sense, appetite, and instinct; beyond these they can make no progress. But man, in consequence of his active and intelligent powers, is ever advancing in the discovery of truths, both moral and intellectual. By means of that singular faculty, whereby men can communicate their thoughts to others, though living in different ages and distant regions of the world, great improvements have been made

made in the various arts and ſciences, and the beauty, magnificence, and order of the works of nature have been laid open, in a manner that muſt excite our admiration and aſtoniſhment.

The effect of this, however, has not always been ſo happy as might have been expected. It has often filled thoſe who call themſelves philoſophers with a high degree of vanity and conceit. It has led them to believe that nothing was too difficult for their comprehenſion, and that what they could not underſtand, could not poſſibly be true.

Others, indeed, who made deeper reflections upon the extent and ſubtlety of the objects of knowledge, and alſo upon the weakneſs of the human faculties, together with the brevity of life, have entered into the ſpirit of the antient Academicians, and embraced the modeſt principles of that ſect.

In reality, our knowledge is very limited; we ſee but the ſurfaces of things; but their

intimate

intimate nature is covered with a vail which we cannot penetrate.

Mind and matter are the two great objects of our knowledge. With regard to matter, the primary qualities which we discover by our ſenſes are, extenſion, diviſibility, and ſolidity. But then, beſides theſe qualities, we neceſſarily perceive ſomething in which they are united, and in which they ſubſiſt: Something which is extended, different from empty ſpace, as it is alſo ſomething ſolid and diviſible. But the nature of that ſomething we have not faculties to comprehend; we call it, however, a material ſubſtance.

It is the ſame thing with regard to mind: We know the qualities of mind in a more certain manner than thoſe of matter, viz. by an inward conſciouſneſs. We are conſcious of ideas of different kinds, of a power to compound and compare ſuch ideas, and to obſerve the reſult and conſequence of ſuch operations. We are alſo conſcious of a variety of ſenſations, paſſions, and affec-

tions, the ſources either of pleaſure or pain; and we conſider all theſe mental qualities as united and ſubſiſting in one and the ſame ſubject, though we do not comprehend the nature of it, but give it the general name of a *ſpiritual ſubſtance*. A late very ſubtile philoſopher is pleaſed to affirm, that theſe mental qualities have no common principle of union and ſubſiſtence, but that they are looſe, and independent of one another. But this is contrary to our cleareſt perceptions; for, when we have at one and the ſame time the different ſenſations of ſmell, ſound, taſte, &c. and alſo feel the reſpective pleaſures attending them, we are conſcious that they are all united in one and the ſame ſubject. Further, when we purſue a train of reaſoning, we are conſcious that it is one and the ſame principle which diſcerns the evidence of the premiſes; which compares them together, and diſcovers the force of the concluſion. And we are not capable of having any ſtronger evidence than what ariſes from this intimate conſciouſneſs. The

only

only principle upon which the fore-mentioned opinion can be founded is this, that what we cannot comprehend, cannot exiſt. But this is a principle which ſuppoſes man omniſcient, and is therefore infinitely abſurd. We may, no doubt, have certain means of knowing that ſomething exiſts, though we are not able fully to diſcover its particular nature.

But, it may be ſaid, ſince we know not the eſſence either of mind or matter, how can we know their difference? For aught we know, this obſcure thing called *matter*, may be capable of ſuch modifications as may produce thought, and ſuch qualities as are ſuppoſed to be purely mental.

But, in anſwer to this, however unknown the internal nature of theſe different ſubſtances may be, yet, from the incompatibility of their known external qualities, we may with certainty infer, that they cannot exiſt in the ſame common ſubject.

We ſhall therefore proceed to ſhow, that the mind cannot be diviſible, and therefore cannot be material.

Let

Let us ſuppoſe any ſenſation whatever, a degree of pain for example; if this pain was felt by matter, then, as matter conſiſts of parts, every part muſt feel the pain; for pain is a real ſenſation, not a relative idea, like that order or harmony which may ariſe from a certain diſpoſition of the parts of matter. Inſtead of one ſimple pain, therefore, which is felt, there muſt be as many diſtinct pains as there are different parts, exceeding all number, as matter is diviſible *in infinitum*, than which nothing can be more abſurd. Indeed, if we ſuppoſe matter ſuſceptible of thought, (the moſt real and intereſting quality that we can imagine), then the different parts of matter muſt think, and the thought of one part muſt be diſtinct from that of another; for, though the ſeveral parts are united in point of contact, yet they are different in nature, and ſeparable from one another. Thus, inſtead of one ſimple thinking being, we muſt have innumerable ſuch beings. The ſimplicity of thought, therefore, is altogether incompatible

patible with the compounded nature of matter.

Further, it has been ſhown in a former diſſertation, that matter is incapable of active power; but we know the activity of the mind, by the conſciouſneſs of the power it has of arranging and comparing its ideas at pleaſure. This active being, therefore, cannot be material.

Indeed, the qualities of mind and matter are perfectly incompatible: Matter can be divided, and one body become two, or more different bodies; but thought cannot be divided even in imagination, ſo that one ſimple idea ſhall become two diſtinct ideas, or one proceſs of reaſoning become two different proceſſes; and this we perceive by inward conſciouſneſs, the moſt certain and moſt immediate ſource of evidence.

The antient materialiſts repreſented the ſoul as a kind of harmony reſulting from a certain organization of the body, and, conſequently, that it was totally dependent upon the body, ſubject to all its variations,

whether

whether of increaſe or decay, and at laſt annihilated upon the total diſſolution of the body.

It muſt be allowed, that there is a remarkable ſympathy betwixt the ſoul and the body; and this ſympathy is intended to ſerve very neceſſary purpoſes in their preſent ſtate of union. Yet, whatever the ſoul may ſuffer from its ſympathy with the body, a little reflection upon the quality and powers of the mind will demonſtrate, in the cleareſt manner, the eſſential difference betwixt theſe two principles, and the ſuperiority and command which the one has over the other.

Mind is evidently poſſeſſed of active power; we feel its ſtrong exertion in the whole proceſs of our reaſoning. It calls in ideas at pleaſure; it arranges and compares them; it examines their agreement or diſagreement.

Theſe operations are not the effects of any other active being behind the curtain; it is mind, the conſcious mind, which is the immediate cauſe of them.

The

The active power of mind is alſo very conſpicuous in the oppoſition it makes to the paſſions. By a firm and continued exertion, it is able to ſubdue the ſtrongeſt paſſions, and reſiſt the keeneſt appetites, even to the death and diſſolution of the body; and ſuch atchievements are the moſt convincing proof of its active power, and high authority.

Mind, therefore, and matter, are in themſelves very different principles. There is nothing in matter that can give the leaſt ſuſpicion of active power; and what is called *vis inertiae*, is a quality ſtanding in oppoſition to a power of moving itſelf. Matter, therefore, is but a paſſive inſtrument of a miniſterial nature, and entirely ſubject to the active power of mind; whereas mind is capable of high exertions; it chooſes and changes its objects; and theſe are often ſubtile, ſpiritual, and ſublime, totally repugnant to any qualities of matter.

I believe no body was ever bold enough to affirm, that matter totally quieſcent is

ſuſceptible

ſuſceptible of reaſon, will, and active power. If it is poſſible for matter to admit of ſuch mental qualities, this muſt be the effect of ſome particular motion, colliſion, and concourſe of its parts; and the cauſe of ſuch motion muſt either be mind or matter itſelf. If we ſuppoſe it mind, then this mind upon the ſuppoſition muſt be immaterial; this muſt be giving up the queſtion, as it forces us upon the abſurd diſtinction of immaterial and material minds. But let us ſuppoſe that matter can move itſelf, (a thing formerly ſhown to be impoſſible), yet ſurely the blind impulſes of brute matter never can produce ſo beautiful and ſo noble an effect as an intelligent and active ſpirit.

The Epicurean notion of the material univerſe being the effect of the fortuitous concourſe of atoms, is juſtly exploded as the groſſeſt abſurdity; but it would be a much greater abſurdity to ſuppoſe, that, from ſuch concourſe of atoms, a world of ſpirits could ariſe, capable to hold a correſpondence with one another from the moſt diſtant parts of the

the globe, each of whom is in its nature of greater excellence and importance than all the material world put together.

The boundleſs powers of imagination, which no extent of ſpace or time can limit; the regular proceſs of reaſoning, theſe exquiſitely fine ſenſes, which open up to us all the beauties of the natural and moral world; thoſe great exertions of the ſoul, whereby it riſes above all created nature, to the contemplation, love, and adoration of the infinite perfections of an eternal being, are qualities of ſuch excellence, as to ſtamp upon the human mind ſome characters of a divine nature, and which never can be the effect of any motions whatever of dull inanimated matter.

Indeed, when we give a juſt attention to the noble powers of the ſoul, our admiration of the incomprehenſible union of mind and matter, cannot be greater than our full perception of their total difference.

PART II.

BUT, though it ſhould be allowed that the ſoul is immaterial, yet it will be ſaid, that it cannot be inferred from this, that it is immortal, or even that it ſurvives the diſſolution of the body. This, no doubt, is true; but this is a matter which muſt be examined upon different principles.

From the diſſolution of the body, we cannot infer the extinction of the ſoul. The body itſelf is not annihilated by its diſſolution; it only ſuffers a total derangement of its parts. It may, therefore, be preſumed, that the ſoul, of a much nobler nature, is not annihilated neither; and it does not conſiſt of parts that make it capable of diſſolution.

It may be ſaid, that we have no idea how the ſoul can ſubſiſt in a ſeparate ſtate; but it is as true, that we have no idea how it

is

is united to matter, though we are certain of the fact.

The future exiſtence of the ſoul, and eſpecially its immortality, muſt entirely depend upon the will of the Creator.

All our reaſoning, therefore, upon this ſubject, muſt be directed to diſcover what is the will of God, with regard to the future deſtination of man.

For this purpoſe, we ſhall conſider the analogy of nature, and the eſſential requiſites of moral government.

When we examine the works of Nature, we obſerve the conſtant characters of wiſdom and deſign, a fitneſs, a proportion, and correſpondency of one thing to another, every where taking place.

Nothing appears to be created in vain; but ſome end or purpoſe ſeems ever to be intended to be ſerved by every thing that is made; and this, indeed, ſeems to be a neceſſary effect of the wiſdom of the Supreme Creator.

Let

Let us then conſider ſome of the qualities of the human mind, and compare them with this general analogy of nature.

The mind has a power of reflecting upon the paſt, and looking forward into futurity; and a deſire of happineſs is one of the ſtrongeſt principles in our nature. This ſtrong principle of the human mind muſt ſtretch itſelf into futurity, in which it never can find any point where it would reſt ſatisfied and content. Our deſires, after a continuation of happineſs, are certainly ſtrong and interminable, which the ſhort period of human life never can ſatisfy or circumſcribe.

If this period, therefore, is conſidered as the full meaſure of our exiſtence, to what purpoſe ſuch extenſive proſpects into futurity, with ſtrong deſires of happineſs, accompanying them? Such deſires muſt be fruitleſs and vain, if they have no real object correſponding to them; nay, they muſt be the ſources of miſery and diſtreſs, if we muſt reflect that they never are to be ſatisfied.

But

But further, there is another peculiar quality of the human mind, whereby it is capable of making progreſſive improvements, both intellectual and moral.

Man is not, like other animals, confined within a line, which he is not allowed to paſs; but, by the proper exerciſe of his rational powers, he makes continual advances in the diſcovery of truth; and, after the higheſt improvement of ſcience his preſent circumſtances will admit of, he can eaſily form an idea of fairer and more extenſive fields of knowledge opening up to his view, when the clouds and darkneſs which at preſent intercept them are totally diſpelled. In his preſent ſtate, therefore, his mental powers cannot arrrive at their complete objects, and full perfection.

The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to his moral qualities. By a vigorous exertion, man makes continual improvements in virtue; theſe improvements are, however, but gradual, as they meet with ſtrong oppoſition from the paſſions, and this oppoſi-

tion

tion is a ſource of much uneaſineſs, and creates great difficulty. If we ſhall then ſuppoſe, that virtue, after a long conflict with irregular paſſions, ſhall at laſt obtain a victory, whereby ſhe may be enabled to exert all her happy influence; but that this victory ſhall be ſuddenly ſnatched from her by death, to what purpoſe is this moral conſtitution of the mind, which points out a conduct honourable in itſelf, and promiſes to reward it with ſolid happineſs at laſt?

But the argument will receive the ſtrongeſt illuſtration, when we turn our thoughts to the moral government of the world.

That the government of the world is moral, cannot admit of a doubt; virtue is the genuine ſource of happineſs, as vice is that of miſery and diſtreſs in ſociety. If we, therefore, aſcribe (as we muſt do) wiſdom and goodneſs to the Deity, virtue muſt be the object of his approbation, as vice muſt be that of his diſpleaſure; conſequently, happineſs or miſery, rewards or puniſhments, muſt, according to the juſt order of nature, be

be ſeverally allotted to theſe different qualities, in proportion to their true extent and degree. This opinion is ſo natural and obvious, that it has been univerſally embraced by almoſt every nation under the ſun, from whatever ſource derived, whether from the ſtrong dictates of conſcience, or the calmer concluſions of reaſon. And the neceſſary conſequence of this opinion has been as univerſally eſtabliſhed upon the ſame principles, viz. that as this moral oeconomy was very imperfect in the preſent ſtate of things, in which vice was often proſperous, and virtue depreſſed, there behoved, therefore, to be a future ſtate, in which all theſe apparent diſorders ſhould be remedied, and the effects of the divine approbation or diſpleaſure manifeſted in the cleareſt manner. Some, indeed, attempt to weaken the force of this argument, or to give it a different turn. From the apparent diſorders of the preſent ſtate, we have no reaſon (ſay they) to infer a different order of things in any future ſtate; on the contrary, that diſtribution

bution of things which now takes place, it may be preſumed, will be continued in any future ſtate, as proceeding from one and the ſame great cauſe; and, therefore, virtue, though at preſent diſtreſſed, can receive no conſolation from any proſpect of a future ſtate. But the ſophiſtry of this argument is eaſily detected. For the rewards of virtue muſt be ſubſequent to its full exerciſe and proof, and the preſent ſtate ſeems to be the proper period of its exerciſe and trial; this period, therefore, muſt be completed, before a reward can be claimed.

Juſt as it is in the exerciſe of military virtue, the character of a brave ſoldier cannot be eſtabliſhed by one or two gallant actions; he muſt perſevere during the whole campaign, in encountering danger and difficulty, and he cannot expect his general's full approbation, or any proper reward till after the cloſe of the campaign.

Beſides, if virtue was always attended with preſent advantage, its nobleſt efforts and atchievements would be totally precluded.

cluded. A conſtant tenor of proſperity affords a very contracted ſcene for virtue; its higheſt exertions ariſe from danger and diſtreſs. Such trying circumſtances are neceſſary for the exerciſe of fortitude, reſignation, and hope; juſtice itſelf is moſt illuſtrious from the temptations with which it is aſſaulted; and even benevolence acquires a peculiar glory, in the caſe of ſelf-expoſure, to ſave the life of a benefactor or a friend.

From theſe few reflections upon the order of Nature, and the moral government of the world, there appears to be a ſufficiently ſolid foundation for the opinion of a future ſtate, and even of the immortality of the ſoul.

From arguments of this kind, Plato, in ſpeaking of the immortality of the ſoul, expreſſes himſelf in the following terms: καλον μεν το αθλον και η ελπις μεγαλη: 'The 'prize is indeed illuſtrious, and the hope 'of it is great.' A concluſion which would have had much greater force, if that moſt illuſtrious of philoſophers (as Tacitus calls

 him)

him) had been acquainted with the great diſcoveries of the wonderful order of nature which have been made ſince his time.

To ſum up the argument, the characters of wiſdom and deſign, fitneſs and proportion, are conſpicuous in all the other productions of nature which we have acceſs to know. There is, therefore, the ſtrongeſt reaſon to preſume, that the ſame wiſdom is diſplayed in the formation and conſtitution of the human mind, the nobleſt of the works of God in this our world. The mind of man is poſſeſſed of powers and faculties ſuperior to every thing within our horizon.

It has a curioſity and power to know the nature of things, which yet, in the preſent ſtate, is involved in ſuch darkneſs as it can ſeldom penetrate; it has an inextinguiſhable thirſt after happineſs, which all the objects under the ſun cannot ſatisfy; and that *ſummum bonum* which philoſophers have conſidered as the ultimate end of man, muſt exiſt hereafter, or it exiſts no where. Even virtue itſelf, the nobleſt quality the ſoul of

man

man can be poſſeſſed of, derives its greateſt vigour from the views of a hereafter; for, in the preſent ſtate, its ſtrongeſt exertions ariſe from danger, difficulty, and diſtreſs.

The voice of Nature, therefore, loudly proclaims immortality to man; a voice which is heard under the whole heavens, even the moſt barbarous nations having had at leaſt ſome general opinion of a future ſtate of exiſtence.

I ſhall conclude with an analogical argument, in order to relieve the mind from a painful apprehenſion, which may be occaſioned by the total diſſolution of that vital frame with which the ſoul is ſo intimately connected.

The argument ſuggeſted by Monſieur du Pleſſis is to the following purpoſe: The foetus in the womb receives the nouriſhment neceſſary for life by means of its intimate union with the parent; and if this union was totally diſſolved, the foetus would certainly die in the womb. Thus far let us ſuppoſe that we know: Let us be further

ther told, that, at a certain period, the vital union of the foetus with the parent ſhall be totally diſſolved, and that with violence and pain, we would readily conclude, that the death of the foetus muſt be the conſequence. The caſe, however, is quite the reverſe; the foetus ſtill lives, and is indeed in a progreſs to a much nobler life. It exchanges a ſenſitive for a rational life; a dark priſon for a magnificent univerſe, enlightened by the glorious luminaries of heaven.

In like manner, the ſoul, though now exiſting by an intimate union with the body, ſhould that union be diſſolved by death, may ſtill exiſt, and that in a much higher degree of perfection than formerly; it may live what may be called a *divine life*, as much ſuperior to the rational, as that was to the original ſenſitive life.

DISSER-

DISSERTATION V.

The Evidence of the Truth of Revealed Religion from its connection with Providence.

MAN alone, of all the creatures which inhabit this earth, ſeems capable of religion. Several of the inferior animals appear to have ſome ſparks of reaſon, but none of them indicate the leaſt ſenſe of religion. Some philoſophers, therefore, define man to be a religious animal, as they conſider a capacity of religion to be the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of his nature.

Whilſt other animals are unconſcious of the hand that made them, it is the peculiar privilege of man to aſcend to the ſource of his being, and contemplate the perfections of his great Creator. In conſequence of this,

a new and very important ſet of affections ſpring up in his mind, and, raiſing him to the rank of nobler orders of beings, fit and qualify him for the moſt ſublime exerciſes and enjoyments.

But, though a diſpoſition to religion has univerſally prevailed, even among nations the moſt ſavage and barbarous; yet, from the weakneſs of reaſon, or the violence and irregularity of paſſion, religion has every where been corrupted by the groſſeſt ſuperſtition.

From this unhappy effect ſome of the antient philoſophers were led to conclude, that a revelation from heaven was neceſſary to diſpel the darkneſs in which religion was involved, and to rectify our falſe and erroneous views of that very important object.

Amongſt thoſe philoſophers, Plato was one of the moſt enlightened, and moſt diſpaſſionate. He gives us ſeveral hints of the neceſſity of ſuch a revelation; particularly, towards the end of his ſecond Alcibiades, he affirms, that a divine inſtructor was to be

be expected, who might diſpel the darkneſs in which the human mind was at preſent involved, and teach us clearly the duty we owe to God and man.

This opinion of Plato is confirmed by fact. In an early period of the world, God, in pity to the ignorance and errors of mankind, made known to the Jews a ſyſtem of religion, which afterwards receiving great improvement by the advent of the Meſſiah, ſtill ſubſiſts, though under a different form from that of its firſt eſtabliſhment; and being reduced to the greateſt ſimplicity, is accommodated to the condition of every nation under the ſun.

The evidence of this important intervention of Providence is as great as the nature of the thing will admit, and muſt produce the fulleſt conviction in the mind of every candid inquirer.

This evidence of revealed religion is commonly divided into external and internal, though theſe are ſometimes intermixed.

The

The firſt ariſes from a diſplay of the divine perfections in confirmation of it by miraculous works, and the clear prediction of future events; the other is founded in the internal excellence of the religion itſelf.

With regard to the firſt, we have the teſtimony of hiſtory, that many very extraordinary miracles were wrought, in order to eſtabliſh and maintain among the Jews a religion different from, and far excelling any other religion in obſervance in any other part of the known world; and ſome of theſe miracles are ſupported by all the evidence the nature of the thing could admit.

The miraculous deliverance of that people from Egyptian bondage, is confirmed by a ſolemn feſtival immediately inſtituted in memory of it, and continued in obſervance during the ſubſiſtence of the Jewiſh ſtate. It was yet recent, when it was entered into thoſe ſacred records, which were made public to all the people who had been eye witneſſes of the miraculous events, and is very particularly celebrated in ſeveral ſacred hymns,

hymns, compoſed not long after the events themſelves, when the remembrance of them muſt have been very diſtinct.

Public monuments were alſo erected, to perpetuate the memory of ſome of the ſupernatural interpoſitions of Providence in favour of the Jews.

The promulgation of the law was attended with all the grand and awful circumſtances that might inſpire the higheſt reverence of the Deity, and which were not only entered into their ſacred records, but the people, who were eye witneſſes of the aſtoniſhing appearances, were ordered to teach their children the divine ſtatutes; to talk of them ſitting in the houſe, or walking abroad; to write them upon the poſts of their houſe; and on their gates; and, indeed, ſo ſtrong was their opinion of their divine authority, that their Kings durſt not preſume to make any alteration upon them.

With regard to prophecies, theſe related chiefly to the character and advent of the Meſſiah, the great object of the Jewiſh re-

ligion; though ſome of them related to other remarkable events, ſuch as the ſeventy years captivity, and many important circumſtances relative to the Grecian empire, and were literally fulfilled. The character alſo, and the particular atchievements of Cyrus, and his reſtoration of the Jews, are circumſtantially predicted by Iſaiah, who mentions that great Prince by name about two hundred years before his appearance.

The Jews, indeed, full of ideas of worldly grandeur, miſtook the true character, and more important purpoſes of the Meſſiah, and conſidered him only as a temporal deliverer. They, however, underſtood their prophecies better as to the time of his appearance, and were in general expectation of him about the time that Jeſus Chriſt was born.

Jeſus Chriſt, though he had no form nor beauty in the eyes of thoſe who are only ſtruck with the falſe glare of external pomp and ſhew, yet he was truly poſſeſſed of perfect moral excellence. In his character, he united

united every virtue that could attract our love, or excite our admiration.

He diſplayed the importance even of thoſe virtues which are overlooked, nay undervalued by the men of the world, even thoſe who call themſelves philoſophers.

The deſcription of the character of Jeſus Chriſt given us by the Apoſtles, muſt be a true copy from the original, otherwiſe a character ſo juſt, ſo perfect, and complete, which ſo far exceeded whatever human wiſdom could form an idea of, never could have entered into the minds of ſuch plain and illiterate men as theſe were.

The character, as it was adapted to the nature of man, might be called human; but in its ſource, its extent, and degree, it was truly divine.

Jeſus Chriſt was repeatedly declared by a voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God: And he gave the cleareſt proof of the divinity of his perſon and character, by many aſtoniſhing miracles which he wrought, often in the moſt public manner. But his

reſurrection

reſurrection from the dead, as it was the ſtrongeſt proof of his divine power, ſo it was the great foundation of the faith and hope of his ſincere diſciples.

This amazing event was ſupported by the teſtimony of moſt unexceptionable witneſſes, who ſealed their teſtimony with their blood. And the truth of it was put beyond all doubt by its connection with events which could not be called in queſtion, ſuch as the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt at Pentecoſt, and the immediate and ſucceſsful propagation of the goſpel through many diſtant nations of the world by a few illiterate men, who knew no other language but their mother tongue, and whoſe ſtrong religious prejudices ſtood in direct oppoſition to Chriſtianity.

Upon this occaſion, I cannot help remarking a little more particularly, that whereas, by ſome infidel writers of the preſent age, great ſtreſs has been laid upon religious prejudices, in order to direct all their force againſt the evidence of Chriſtianity,

nity, this force on the contrary operates ſtrongly in favour of that evidence.

At the time that Jeſus Chriſt appeared, the Jews conſidered themſelves as the peculiar favourites of heaven, and had the greateſt contempt of all other nations, whom they believed to be rejected of God. They were perſuaded, that theſe nations were to be ſubjected to the rule and dominion of their own ſtate; in conſequence of which, as individuals, they flattered themſelves with the proſpect of being advanced to the higheſt offices of honour and emolument in this imaginary univerſal empire.

In oppoſition, however, to all thoſe ſanguine expectations, Jeſus Chriſt plainly told his diſciples, (whoſe religious and national prejudices were the ſame with thoſe of their countrymen), that, upon the eſtabliſhment of his religion in the world, the form of the Jewiſh religion, though given by God himſelf from Mount Sinai, ſhould be totally diſſolved, and, for this purpoſe, their city and temple ſhould be deſtroyed within the courſe

courſe of the preſent generation, and that every other nation ſhould be equally intereſted in the bleſſings of his religion with the Jews: That, inſtead of the worldly proſperity and honour which they vainly flattered themſelves with, they ſhould be expoſed (as would be his own caſe) to ignominy, perſecution, and death, often in its cruelleſt form.

To fall ſuddenly from ſuch high hopes, which they believed founded in divine authority, and relinquiſhing the religion of their fathers, acknowledged to be given by God himſelf, to embrace a doctrine which was to expoſe them to the greateſt miſery and diſgrace in this world, required an evidence clearer than the light of the ſun, and which the ſtrongeſt principles of the human heart could not reſiſt.

But, to return to the character of Jeſus Chriſt, I ſhall only further mention, that he gave frequent proofs of perceiving the thoughts of mens hearts; and his knowledge of future events was fully verified by

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his exact prediction of the total deſtruction of Jeruſalem, with the time, and many other particular circumſtances attending that awful cataſtrophe.

Theſe things I have mentioned very ſhortly, and in a general way; they have, however, afforded many ſubjects of juſt and ſtrong reaſoning by writers of the firſt character.

I ſhall at preſent ſubjoin only this ſingle obſervation, that we have here a long ſeries of ſupernatural events, from the early ages of the world, to the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, many of which are diſtinguiſhed by an unexceptionable evidence peculiar to themſelves; but the great force of the argument ariſes from the united evidence of the whole, and that not merely by addition, but by multiplication, as the concurrence of the proofs is a circumſtance of the greateſt weight, and quite different from that of their numbers. And the ground of this union of evidence is formed by the relation of the whole ſeries, and every particular

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part of it to one great object, viz. the eſtabliſhment of true religion in the world.

I ſhall, therefore, proceed to make a few obſervations upon the internal evidence of revealed religion.

Even in the early ages of the world we are aſſured that there was an univerſal corruption of religion; the knowledge of the true God was totally loſt, and a multiplicity of fictitious deities was ſubſtituted in his place. Not only the heavenly bodies, but animals, vegetables, and even vices, became the objects of worſhip. Indeed, almoſt every thing was worſhipped as God, except God himſelf.

And their religious ceremonies were ſuited to the nature of their deities. They were often impure, impious, and cruel. And the religious, or rather ſuperſtitious principle, prevailed even over the ſtrongeſt natural affection, and could often conſtrain an unhappy parent to ſacrifice his innocent child upon the cruel altars of their Gods.

In

In this ſtate of groſs and univerſal corruption, Moſes appeared in the world. He was educated among the Egyptians, who, though they excelled in other arts and ſciences, yet, perhaps, were more debaſed than any people, by the loweſt and moſt abſurd ſuperſtition.

Moſes, however, undertook the reſtoration of true religion, and declared that he was authoriſed by a commiſſion from heaven for that purpoſe. Accordingly, he convinced his countrymen, that the Gods whom the nations adored, were no Gods at all, and that the worſhip that was paid to them was impious, and vain. That there was only one true God, who ought to be the object of their worſhip.

And the repreſentation of the true God given by Moſes and the prophets who ſucceeded him as cuſtodiers of religion, is both juſt and ſublime.

God is repreſented as poſſeſſed of infinite perfection; the name that he is made to aſſume is, I AM THAT I AM, than which,

nothing could more emphatically expreſs that ſelf-exiſtence which is the foundation of every other perfection.

We have the ſtrongeſt idea of his Almighty power, by its amazing effects. This great univerſe came into exiſtence from nothing by his powerful word. 'He ſpake, 'and it was done, he commanded, and it 'ſtood faſt.'

His omniſcience penetrates the darkeſt receſſes, and knows the thoughts of the heart before they exiſt. All the wheels of nature are kept in motion by his conſtant influence; and, amidſt the continual changes of created beings, he alone remains unchanged.

'He is the high and the lofty One who 'inhabiteth eternity,' and his name is holy; for he is alſo poſſeſſed of every moral excellence and perfection.

The foregoing diſplay of the divine perfections is the grandeſt object that can be preſented to the mind of man. Such ſublime ideas are, however, become familiar

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to us, who conſtantly receive them from the peruſal of the ſacred writings; but if we could abſtract from this great advantage which we enjoy, and compare the religion of the Jews with that of every other nation beſides, we will find the propriety and ſublimity of the one ſtrongly contraſted by the abſurd and abject ſuperſtition of the other, although it will be allowed, that, in other reſpects, the Jews were not wiſer than their neighbours.

The worſhip and homage required by the religion of Moſes, was reverence, love, ſubmiſſion, truſt, and confidence. True piety conſiſted in the exerciſe of theſe eſſential virtues and graces, and remained uniformly the ſame during the whole Jewiſh diſpenſation, and received no material alteration from the Chriſtian faith. The great difference betwixt theſe diſpenſations was, that the religion of the Jews was clogged by a multiplicity of ceremonies; whereas the Chriſtian religion is remarkable for a beautiful ſimplicity, called by a Heathen hiſtorian,

rian *, *religio ſimplex et abſoluta*, a religion ſimple and perfect.

But then, it is to be obſerved, that the Jewiſh ceremonies were not conſidered as conſtituting the eſſence of their religion; they are always diſtinguiſhed from the moral duties, without which they are declared to be of no manner of avail.

One deſign of theſe ceremonies perhaps was, to make a ſtrong impreſſion upon the ſenſes of a people, whoſe proneneſs to idolatry reaſon alone was not able to overcome. But their principal uſe appears to have been, to prepare the way for, and illuſtrate the evidence of the Chriſtian diſpenſation.

The Jewiſh and Chriſtian ſyſtems form in fact but one religion, though they deſcribe it in different ſtages in its progreſs in the world.

Under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, it appears in an imperfect and myſterious form; Chriſtianity unvails the myſtery which was hid from ages, and completes the revelation.

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* Am. Marc.

The manner, indeed, of publiſhing theſe two different diſpenſations of religion was very different. The firſt was publiſhed to the Jews with all the immediate circumſtances of awe and terror, which might make the ſtrongeſt impreſſion upon the human mind. The other was gradually propagated among the nations, by the gentle methods of inſtruction and argument. And, if the miraculous exertion of divine power, by the thunderings and lightenings from Mount Sinai, and the tremendous voice of God himſelf, were conſpicuous in the promulgation of the law, the more ſilent, though in the eye of reaſon as powerful and ſupernatural manifeſtations of divinity, attended the propagation of the goſpel. To this only it can be aſcribed, that a few illiterate Jews, in the loweſt line of life, ſhould have diſperſed themſelves amongſt the different nations of the world, to whom they were univerſally odious, and whoſe language they did not underſtand; and yet, in ſpite of the ſtrongeſt oppoſition, and cruelleſt perſecution,

ſecution, ſhould have perſuaded not only the vulgar, but many of their philoſophers, and perſons in high rank of life *, to abandon the religion of their country, and the Gods of their fathers, and to embrace a religion inculcating a ſevere morality, and to worſhip, as a God, one who was confeſſedly crucified at Jeruſalem as a malefactor.

So great was their ſucceſs, that, in a very few centuries, they overturned all the antients ſuperſtitions, not only within the large extent of the Roman empire, but among nations to whom the Roman power never penetrated.

Upon this occaſion, it deſerves to be remarked, that the Apoſtles who were firſt employed in propagation of the goſpel (St Paul himſelf not excepted) had the moſt violent prejudices againſt all other nations, whom they believed to be excluded from the favour of God, and deſtined to be ſubjected to the univerſal dominion of the Jews; yet

* Non ſtatim ex ultima plebe conſiſtimus, ſi purpuras, et honores veſtros recuſamus. MIN. FEL.

yet ſo great a change was ſuddenly made upon their ſentiments and diſpoſitions, that they chearfully ſubmitted to every hardſhip and diſtreſs, and even to death itſelf, in exerting themſelves to purſue the means of procuring the moſt ſolid bleſſings to every people under heaven. And we find them expreſſing the moſt ſincere regard, and the warmeſt affection to thoſe who had formerly been always the objects of their contempt and averſion.

If we ſuppoſe that this religion came from God, it is plain that the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations would not both ſubſiſt at the ſame time; and, therefore, the total and final deſtruction of the Jewiſh temple and ſtate immediately followed the propagation of the goſpel.

Beſides the knowledge of the true God, and the admirable ſyſtem of morals received from revelation, the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity carry in themſelves the ſtrongeſt characters of their divinity. My preſent deſign, however, only allows me to make

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ſhort obſervations upon what may appear moſt material in this important ſubject.

Nothing ſeems to have been more painful to the mind of man than a ſenſe of guilt. This appears to have been the ſource of moſt of the ſuperſtitions which prevailed in the heathen world.

The great object of Chriſtianity is to reſtore guilty men to the favour and friendſhip of their Creator, ſo as to obtain the happy effects of his goodneſs to as great extent as innocence, and even perfect virtue, could ever hope for.

Againſt ſo great an effect, an inſurmountable obſtacle appears to ariſe from the unalterable nature of the moral diſtinctions.

To put the guilty, though penitent, upon the ſame footing with innocence, and to beſtow equal favours upon thoſe who had violated the laws of moral government, and whoſe obedience ſtill remained very imperfect, with thoſe who had paid a conſtant and uniform regard to theſe laws, would diſcover an improper partiality to vice, and

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be inconſiſtent with the perfect rectitude of divine adminiſtration.

To prevent ſo bad an effect, we are informed that God has appointed a mediator, of ſuch a character as to be able to eſtabliſh mankind in a ſtate of favour, and perfect friendſhip with their Creator. But where was ſuch a mediator to be found? Any created moral agent could only act for himſelf, incapable of works of ſupererogation. The anſwer to this queſtion opens up to us the moſt myſterious doctrine of Chriſtianity, which is commonly expreſſed by the name of *Trinity*. This doctrine repreſents God under three different deſignations; the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST. The true grounds of this diſtinction appear to be beyond the reach of the preſent powers of the human mind *, although antient phi-

 loſophy

* It may appear preſumption to make the myſterious doctrine of the Trinity the ſubject of weak human reaſoning; yet I have ſome inclination to purſue and improve an idea ſuggeſted by a perſon as eminent for the

ſoſophy ſeems to have had ſome obſcure views of it.

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the abilities of his mind, as the qualities of his heart, I mean Monſieur du Pleſſis.

The Son of God is called in ſcripture the λογος, the Reaſon, or Wiſdom of God. The idea ſuggeſted by this term is relative to the underſtanding. We may, therefore, conceive that God, from all eternity, formed a moſt complete and perfect idea of his own divine nature. This idea muſt therefore be an effect, or rather an eternal act of the divine power and underſtanding, and it muſt be a perfect image and reſemblance of the Deity. The Son of God is accordingly frequently called in ſcripture *the image of God*, and particularly he is called *the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon;* the moſt glorious emanation, and the moſt perfect reſemblance and expreſſion of Deity.

To aſſiſt our conception of the perfection of this divine image, we may reflect that there are ideas in the divine mind which are never brought into real exiſtence, but there are others which are realiſed.

The nature of that power which can produce actual exiſtence we know not; but the certainty of it we know from the conſciouſneſs of our own exiſtence. That the whole energy of Deity was exerted in God's eternal idea of himſelf, we muſt believe; and why may we not alſo believe that actual exiſtence may be neceſſarily connected with this eternal idea, formed by the infinite

exertion

The Son of God, who is by Divines called *the ſecond perſon of the Holy Trinity*, is repreſented

exertion of an Omnipotent Mind, ſince we find ſuch exiſtence communicated to the ideas of created ſpirits, by a power to us alſo inconceivable?

If, then, there is nothing contradictory in the preceding view we have ventured to give of this myſterious ſubject, the perfect image of God may, as proceeding from the Deity, be conſidered in the relation of a Son; and, as the Son is likewiſe conſidered as having actual exiſtence, then betwixt the Father and Son a perfect complacence, a mutual and infinite love, muſt take place. This lays the foundation of our conception of the Holy Spirit. What may be further the reſult of this divine relation, tranſcends the preſent powers of the human mind. But, however unknown the nature of the Holy Spirit may be, his operations are diſtinctly remarked by the ſacred writers.

This divine principle is repreſented as the ſource of every moral excellence, the author of all that ſtrength and conſolation which weak mortals ſo much require. A juſt impreſſion of theſe important truths tends to meliorate the heart, and inſpire the mind with peaceful ſerenity, and joyful hope.

Satisfied, in the mean time, with theſe happy effects, we may well delay our further knowledge of ſo ſublime an object, till we arrive at a more perfect ſtate of being.

But I am ſenſible the queſtion may be put on this occaſion, Who is this that darkeneth counſel by words

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repreſented as the great Mediator appointed by God himſelf to accompliſh the great purpoſe of his love and goodneſs. And we are aſſured, that this divine perſon, by doing and ſuffering the will of God, as repreſentative of the human race, has made it perfectly conſiſtent with the honour and authority of divine law and government, to beſtow a crown of immortal happineſs upon the imperfect virtue of weak mortals.

The ſlighteſt reflection muſt make it evident, that the plan of divine government can never be comprehended within the narrow limits of our preſent ſtate; life and immortality are brought into the cleareſt light by the goſpel; and the evidence of this important truth inſpired the Apoſtles with a degree of gratitude and joy which they were at a loſs how to expreſs.

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without knowledge? Indeed, to diſcover or affirm what is truth, in a matter ſo ſublime, appears to be too much for ſuch ſhort-ſighted creatures as we are. My principal deſign is to ſuggeſt certain ideas, which may aſſiſt the faith of thoſe who are unwilling to believe what they cannot fully comprehend.

We are likewiſe aſſured of the reſurrection of the body, not as in its preſent form, as the Mahometans fooliſhly imagine, but refined, rendered in ſome reſpect ſpiritual, and fitted for the nobleſt purpoſes; and, though this doctrine was an object of deriſion to the wiſe Athenians in St Paul's time, yet, as the body is a conſtituent part of human nature, though we may ſee a reaſon for its being changed, we can ſee none for its being totally deſtroyed. And this doctrine is well ſupported by Athenagoras, though an Athenian, yet a Chriſtian philoſopher.

In conſequence of a future ſtate, we are aſſured of a juſt retribution to the good and bad, according to their works; a doctrine, though univerſally received, yet is more explicitly revealed in the goſpel, accompanied with every circumſtance which may encourage our hopes, or alarm our fears.

But it is to be obſerved, that, though the perfection of virtue ought to be our aim, and complete obedience to the will of God

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is ſtill our duty; yet, by the grace of the goſpel, through the intervention of a divine Mediator, ſincere and uniform, though very imperfect obedience, will receive the approbation of the Deity, and be crowned with immortal bliſs.

And we have a purer and much more ſublime repreſentation of the happy condition of good men in a future ſtate than ever human wiſdom could deviſe.

From the bleſſed abodes which theſe inhabit, all evil, whether natural or moral, is for ever excluded; and the heavenly exerciſes in which they are employed, are the native effects of the warmeſt devotion, and moſt perfect virtue.

The promiſe of divine aſſiſtance to ſupport us in the diſcharge of our duty, our bearing the diſtreſſes of life with fortitude, is as neceſſary for ſuch weak creatures as we are, as it is ſuitable to the divine goodneſs to beſtow; and though this intereſting article could not eſcape the obſervation of philoſophers,

philoſophers, yet it is much more clearly and explicitly revealed by the goſpel.

The preceding ſhort and imperfect repreſentation of the chief doctrines of Chriſtianity, exhibit a plan of religion which comprehends truths of the greateſt magnitude and importance, honourable to God, yet accommodated to the weakneſs of man, riſing far above the higheſt reach of human wiſdom. It muſt, therefore, require the utmoſt exceſs of credulity, to believe that ſuch a plan of religion could have entered into the thoughts of a few illiterate fiſhermen of Gallilee, without inſpiration.

It is not neceſſary to the preſent argument to enter any further into this divine ſyſtem of religion; the particulars already mentioned, relative to the external and internal evidence of revelation, muſt produce the moſt complete conviction. Each of theſe particulars carries its evidence in its boſom; but their great importance is, that they all converge toward the ſame focus, and, by their united evidence, place the truth of re-

velation

velation in the ſtrongeſt and cleareſt point of light.

One ſhould think an evidence ſo ſtrong, ſufficient fully to ſatisfy even the moſt cautious and ſceptical inquirer. Let us, however, ſuppoſe an unbeliever to reaſon in this manner. I acknowledge the evidence you have laid before me to have great weight; yet the objects of this evidence are ſo complicated and intereſting, that it would give more eaſe and ſatisfaction to my mind, if it ſhould receive ſome farther confirmation; and I think this is all that a perſon of the leaſt candour can ſay.

I ſhall endeavour to do this, by making ſome reflections upon divine providence.

Whatever was fit for God to create, was equally fit for him to preſerve.

The whole of nature, therefore, and every part of it, muſt be the object of divine providence.

I had occaſion formerly to ſhow, that, as the amazing mechaniſm of the material world is the effect of divine wiſdom, ſo it

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is the continual energy of divine power, which at firſt communicated motion to the wonderful machine, and conſtantly preſerves and directs that motion by unerring laws.

Animals are ſtill in the ſcale of being ſuperior to dull, inactive matter; and, as their exquiſitely curious, nice, and delicate frame ſtands in need of the conſtant care of their Creator, ſo Nature, or Providence, has ſecured a ſufficient ſupply for all their natural deſires and wants.

Man is the nobleſt work of God on earth. He is deſcribed by a heathen poet as a creature capable of moral excellence, of high exertions of thought and underſtanding, and qualified to maintain a dominion over the inferior animals.

We have the beſt reaſon, therefore, to think, that the Deity (whoſe care and attention extends ſo remarkably over all his other works) will not neglect the nobleſt of his earthly creatures, a creature which moſt reſembles himſelf.

The principles of reaſon and conſcience in man require very different ſources of conſolation and ſupport from what other animals ſtand in need of. Theſe are not capable of religion, and do not require its ſupports.

Man alone foreſees evils to come, and he is apt to take a melancholy ſurvey of the calamities incident to human life; and hope and confidence in God can alone counterbalance the painful reflections which thereby ſpring up in his mind.

Man alone, of all animals, is capable of moral virtue, the greateſt excellence and perfection of his nature, and to which he finds himſelf led by a ſenſe of duty; he, therefore, ſtands in need of religion, which is the only ſolid foundation of virtue.

Beſides, the views, the deſires, and capacities of man, raiſe him far above any temporary and tranſient enjoyment. A good durable, elevated, and refined, can alone ſuit and ſatisfy his ſuperior faculties and powers;

powers; and ſuch a good can flow from religion alone.

Reſting, with a pleaſing ſatisfaction, upon this ſupreme good, the ſoul retains a proper reliſh for the common bleſſings of Providence; but, deprived of this great ſupport, it muſt contract a ſullenneſs and deſpondency, which muſt blunt the edge of every other enjoyment.

From the few preceding obſervations, it muſt evidently appear how ſuitable, how neceſſary religion is to the nature and happineſs of man.

Indeed, it ſeems impoſſible for any man who allows himſelf to think at all, to exclude a ſenſe of religion altogether from his mind.

God, therefore, who provides every thing ſuited to the nature and wants of his inferior creatures, will not neglect man in a matter ſo very intereſting, and by which alone he is qualified to pay that homage to his Creator, of which he has made him capable; conſequently, the means of introducing and maintaining amongſt mankind the true knowledge

knowledge of religion, muſt appear a very proper and important object of divine providence.

When, therefore, from the depravity of mankind, the true knowledge of religion was loſt, and the moſt abſurd ſuperſtition almoſt univerſally ſubſtituted in place of it, it was moſt reaſonable to hope, that our gracious Creator would interpoſe in a matter of ſo great conſequence, and would not ſuffer his reaſonable creatures for ever to remain in the moſt impious and dangerous errors, to pay their homage, and to repoſe their truſt and confidence in quadrupeds, reptiles, and even vegetables; but, when the reaſon of the wiſeſt nations was involved in ſuch Cimmerian darkneſs, he would ſend a ray of light from heaven to diſpel this darkneſs, and to reſtore the truth and dignity of religion.

This argument, founded in the nature of God and Providence, is quite different from the direct evidence which may attend the fact itſelf; and, ſuppoſing us ignorant of the

the fact, it would lead us into an inquiry whether it was ſo or not; with a ſtrong preſumption, however, if not a certainty, of diſcovering it really to be the caſe; and, indeed, a very ſhort inquiry will ſoon preſent us with a very wonderful and regular plan of Providence, carried on from the early ages of the world, through all the ſucceſſive revolutions of the Jewiſh ſtate, in ſupport of a religion alledged to have come from God; a religion juſt and ſublime in its doctrines, pure and refined in its precepts, noble and worthy of God in its end; a religion, though under two different diſpenſations, yet eſſentially the ſame, and recorded with circumſtances of the moſt perfect agreement, by writers who lived in the moſt different and diſtant ages of the world.

This religion is ſupported by a frequent and amazing diſplay of the divine perfections, both in miracles and prophecies, by the uncommon revolutions of the Jewiſh ſtate, and by its peculiar connection with a ſucceſſion of great empires; and, laſt of all,

when

when the numerous ceremonies of the firſt diſpenſation (which were chiefly typical of the ſecond) were rendered uſeleſs, by the advent of the great Archetype, we obſerve that diſpenſation totally ſubverted, by the final deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate and temple, as alſo, Julian's vain attempt to rebuild that temple, entirely baffled by a very miraculous interpoſition.

Thus the argument, *a poſteriori*, or from the effect, though ſufficiently ſtrong in itſelf, yet has its ſtrength redoubled by the argument *a priori*, or from the cauſe; and what, in fact, we really diſcover to be the caſe, we infer from the divine perfections ſhould be the caſe.

Our preſent argument may perhaps receive conſiderable illuſtration, if we ſhall ſuppoſe the hiſtory of religion to be falſe, and all the miracles and prophecies alledged in ſupport of it to be deluſion and impoſture. What would be the conſequence? ſurely, to cut off from man all confidence and truſt in God, and render him more deſtitute and

forlorn

forlorn than the beaſts of the field, who have no reflection at all.

To ſuppoſe a religion, excellent in itſelf, authoriſed by the whole plan of Providence, confirmed by exertions of the divine perfections, atteſted in the ſtrongeſt manner, and where no appearance of impoſture has ever been diſcovered; a religion which therefore has been embraced by the wiſeſt and beſt of men, many of whom have ſacrificed their lives for its ſake; to ſuppoſe, I ſay, this religion an impoſture, what is it but to make God an accomplice in the cheat? What is it, but to ſuppoſe the whole procedure of Providence directed to miſlead weak mortals (who ſo much need the aſſiſtance of their Creator) into an error, and that in a matter of the laſt importance? The conſequences, indeed, are ſo impious, that it is diſagreeable further to purſue them; for all the principles of natural religion are thereby totally ſubverted.

Indeed, many of the philoſophers of the preſent age (who think themſelves much wiſer

wiſer than others) are ſo ſenſible of the neceſſary connection betwixt natural and revealed religion, that, not being able to ſeparate them, they chooſe to diſmiſs them both at the ſame time, and take a miſerable refuge in the groſs abſurdities of materialiſm.

I conclude with obſerving, that, though the ſubjects of the preceding reaſoning abounds in materials, a more happy choice and diſpoſition of which would have added both ſtrength and beauty to the argument; yet I hope enough has been ſaid to lay a firm and ſolid foundation for any fair and free inquirer to reſt his faith upon, with the moſt perfect ſecurity.

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